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OR,  
The BOY OARSMAN-DETECTIVE'S  
DOUBLE PULL.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS.

## CHAPTER I.

A BUSINESS INTERVIEW AND A MYSTERY.  
So you think you can beat our man with an unknown, do you? These unknowns are always being sprung on us, but when it comes down to business, they ain't there, as a general thing."

"Well, money talks," was the response.

"Certainly. Where's yours?"

"Here!"

The last speaker put down a large roll of bills, and looked into the eyes of the other with an expression of determination that could not be mistaken.

The scene was the private office of the editor of a

SIX MORE STROKES! ONE! TWO! THREE! CRACK! ONE OF OWNEY'S OARS HAD  
BROKEN SHORT OFF!



sporting journal, and there were four persons present.

Two of them—the men whose conversation opens this chapter—were typical "sports."

One was a big, burly fellow, with heavy red mustache, strongly-marked features and keen black eyes ever on the watch for some slip on the part of those with whom he was dealing. His dress was a business suit of brown and white check, surmounted by a white plug hat, with a broad black band. This was he who had expressed his contempt for "unknowns."

The other was a little, weazened, dried-up specimen of humanity, in a soft hat and shabby clothes of no particular pattern.

The remaining occupants of the room were the editor himself—a young man of fashionable appearance, and a well-known pugilist, who had come with the little man to see that he got "a square deal."

"Well, now, how much is there in that pile?" asked the big man, as he gazed at the money on the table.

"Five hundred dollars."

"And what do you propose?"

"To row your man three miles with a turn, regular racing shells, over the Hulton course, Pittsburg, for twenty-five hundred dollars a side, race to take place within sixty days from date."

"Um! You have it down fine."

"I mean business."

"You bet yer life we do," put in the pugilist. "I only wish it were a scrapping-match, 'stead of one of these here rowin' rackets, on'y fit for kids."

"Shut up, Jim Cripps! You don't know nothing about this matter, and you don't want to put in your oar at the wrong place," warned the little man.

Jim Cripps, the prize-fighter, who could have smashed the little man with one blow of his brawny fist, but who evidently stood in awe of his diminutive companion, promptly obeyed; he "shut up."

"I'll cover your money. We'll put up in the hands of Mr. Wolf, here, but you'll get badly left, as sure as my name is Frank Burton. Stretcher Bull isn't going to be laid out by any unknown. Anyhow, it is a soft enough thing for us. I would like to make a side bet of a thousand with you that we beat you by at least half a length."

"Done!" assented the little man.

In a few minutes Mr. Wolf, the editor, held three thousand dollars—one thousand being a deposit, and the other two the side-bet between Frank Burton and Scrawny Will, which was the elegant pseudonym to which the little man answered among his acquaintances.

"I suppose this will be satisfactory to Stretcher," said Scrawny Will, as he parted from Burton on the steps of the office.

"I'd like to know what he has got to do with it," was the contemptuous reply of Burton. "All he has to do is to row when and where he is told. I pay him for it, and that is enough for him."

"So long!" and Scrawny walked away.

"Now, Jim, you just want to keep that big mouth of yours shut, and I will let you into a good thing," he said, as he and Cripps started down Broadway.

"Thanks, generous captain, and what do you want me to do? You ain't the kind of man to give me a good thing 'less I do something to earn it. Who do you want me to lick?"

"Lick? You're always thinking about licking somebody."

"Certainly. That's my trade."

"You are a good friend of Stretcher's, ain't you?" asked Scrawny, not heeding Cripps's last remark.

"Ay. Had many a lark with him."

"Can you see him to-night?"

"Dunno. Burton's a handlin' of him, and he keeps his man mighty close."

"You know where he is?"

"Yes. They've got him 'own to Mooney Baggs's dive, on the Bowery. They don't let him drink nothin', but they are fillin' him up with raw beef-steak and oatmeal mush, and makin' him use the clubs and bells nearly all the time he's awake. They can't do nothin' with him unless they keep him in trainin' all the while."

"Ah! They'll train him down too fine, if they don't watch it."

"Oh, no. They let him take a spin occasionally. He has had two or three scrub races lately. Then he manages to get out once in a while when Burton is away, and gets on a tare, killing all the trainin' he has had for a week."

"Good! You must get at him to-night."

"I'll try."

"Keep him sober until you can fix things with him."

"But what do you want me to do?"

"Stoop down."

Cripps did as requested, and Scrawny whispered something in his ear.

The pugilist started.

"Is that straight?"

"Straight as a string!"

"And there's five hundred dollars in it for me?"

"If you don't make an idiot of yourself and spoil the lay."

"You can depend on me, Cap."

"It's the last job you get from me if you spoil it."

"I won't spoil it. But you had better give me a few more pointers."

"All right. Let's step in here."

The two turned into a small saloon to which entrance was obtained by a narrow doorway that would hardly be noticed save by one already aware of its presence.

A long hallway, dim and close, ended in a door with a dirty window on which the words "Sample Room" could be faintly discerned by the light within.

Scrawny led the way and pushed the door open with the air of one familiar with the place, closely followed by the pugilist.

A small bar, behind which the closely-cropped head of the bartender, bobbing about as he mixed a drink for a solitary customer, could be seen shining like a danger-signal on a foggy evening.

In a corner of the apartment was a little closet with just room for a table and three chairs.

Here the two companions seated themselves and having been served with their favorite drinks they proceeded to business.

The solitary customer before referred to—a shabby genteel man, who looked like a book-agent out of luck, and who had probably seen better days, leaned against the bar and seemed to be absorbed in the occupation of making his mixed drink last as long as possible, while the red-headed bartender amused himself by playing solitaire with a much-used pack of cards on the end of the bar.

"Of course Stretcher has to lose this race," commenced Scrawny.

"Course," was Cripps's sententious reply.

"I feel certain my man can beat him anyhow, but I must make quite sure."

"Course," asserted Cripps again.

"The race is to come off on the 28th of July. This is the 30th of June. Guess we can get everything fixed in that time."

"Course."

"Now, you must see Stretcher to-night, get him fixed, then make an appointment for me. We can't do it at Baggs's? It wouldn't do for me to be seen around there now. Let him meet me here any time he says."

"All right."

"The trouble is Stretcher is such a fool that I doubt if he knows how to give away a race," muttered Scrawny, reflectively.

"If he don't do it up in good shape, I'll break his face," and Cripps brought his fist down on the table with a crash that made the shabby-genteel man start and the bartender lose the combination in his game of solitaire.

"You won't do anything of the kind. When I want you to break anybody's face I'll let you know. Do as I tell you, and keep quiet."

"You are always telling me to keep quiet," whined Cripps, in aggrieved tones. "Guess I know how to keep my mouth shut. When did I ever give anything away?"

"How about the Montville Bank job?" put in a hollow voice that seemed to come from under the table.

"What d'yemean?" yelled Cripps, starting up and looking vindictively at Scrawny. "Why can't you let things sleep?"

But Scrawny was evidently as much surprised as his companion, as he gasped:

"I didn't speak."

"You lie!"

In an instant Scrawny held a bull-dog revolver under Cripps's nose. He did not fire, however.

"You are a fool, Jim Cripps, and I know it, or I would put you where you'd never call another man a liar," said Scrawny, coolly, as he returned his weapon to his pocket. "I tell you I did not open my mouth."

"Well, who did?" asked the now thoroughly cowed prize-fighter.

He looked into the bar room, but the bartender was deep in his cards at the other end of the bar, while the solitary customer had dropped into a chair and was snoring as peacefully as a child on its mother's breast.

"Mighty strange thing. Somebody spoke, sure," averred Cripps, as he looked under the table and then glanced suspiciously at Scrawny.

The shabby-genteel man snored louder than ever.

Cripps walked over to him and shook him, but the sleeper did not respond.

"Let him alone, Cripps. You don't think it was him as spoke, do you?" said Scrawny.

"Can't most always tell. The voice came from somewhere," and he gave the snorer another vigorous shake, but beyond a few incoherent exclamations could get nothing out of him.

Cripps was troubled. He did not know what to make of it. He suspected Scrawny, but dared not charge him again with having uttered the mysterious words.

It was whispered among Cripps's friends that he had been concerned in one or two safe-blowing operations, but no one had been able to prove anything of the kind, and he always posed as a strictly honorable man.

"Well, do you think you can work it with Stretcher to-night?" asked Scrawny, resuming the original conversation.

"I'll try."

"You must not fail."

"All right; I won't fail."

"Remember. Five hundred dollars for yourself on the day we beat Stretcher Bull on the Hulton course."

"You can consider him beaten."

"Well, it is four o'clock now. You had better be getting toward Baggs's. The sooner you commence operations the better. Be careful and keep your mouth shut."

"Trust me," said the prize-fighter as he sauntered out.

"Yes, I'll trust you just as long as I can see you," was Scrawny's inward remark, as the door closed behind Cripps's retreating form. "You are too fond of blabbing to suit me. Now, let me see," he muttered, as he consulted a bulky note-book and made some memoranda. "I will see Cripps in the morning, to find out how he got along with Stretcher. As soon as that matter is off my mind I must get off

to Pittsburg to look after the boy. My! Won't the crowd be surprised when they see my unknown! They'll be still more astonished when they find out that he is only a boy. Ah! But such a boy! He don't know himself what he can do, and I ain't going to be fool enough to tell him. He's the coming oarsman though, sure!"

Scrawny rubbed his hands and chuckled to himself in intense enjoyment of his thoughts.

Had he not been so closely absorbed he would have noticed that the shabby genteel man was watching him keenly.

"Well, I must be going," continued Scrawny as he replaced his note-book in his pocket and arose from his seat. "I wonder who made that remark that upset the slugging friend-so? I didn't hear the words myself, but they seemed to hit him in a tender spot. I guess it was only this drunken fool snoring," giving the outstretched feet of the apparent sleeper a vicious kick as he passed. "Cripps has a bad conscience. Thank my stars, I have always acted square, and people's snoring don't trouble me."

No sooner was Scrawny outside the door than the shabby genteel man started up, very wide-awake, and made for the door.

In the hallway he *evaporated* in a mysterious way, for the person who followed Scrawny Will into the street was a young fellow not more than eighteen years of age, with handsome features, short curling blonde hair and with the light springy step of an athlete.

His clothes, with the exception of the plug hat, which he had exchanged for a soft low crowned article were those of the shabby genteel man, but no one would have said the two men were one and the same person.

"So my disguise was a good one and I have found out more than I expected. Scrawny Will may discover that I know more about myself than he suspects. Score one for Owney the Oarsman! He'll 'git thar' every time."

## CHAPTER II.

### A WRESTLE AND A FIGHT.

It was eight o'clock in the evening of the day on which occurred the incidents narrated in the last chapter.

Mooney Baggs's sporting saloon on the Bowery had not yet awoke from the lethargy that generally overcame it during the day.

A lively place was Baggs's about midnight. Then it was that men well known in racing, boating, boxing, cock-fighting, dog-fighting and other select circles favored the dingy little bar-room with their presence.

There was an atmosphere of sport at Baggs's only exceeded by that of stale beer, whisky, and dead-and-gone cigars which always hung over it.

The walls were of course decorated with the usual colored prints of fistic, aquatic, and other heroes, interspersed with portraits of noted turf-flyers doing a fast mile, or standing still to be admired in a vividly green paddock.

At the back of the bar-room, and divided from it by a wooden screen, was a spacious hall, with a small stage at the upper end, chiefly devoted to exhibitions of sparring, agreeably relieved by an occasional ballad, rendered by a gentleman in a greasy dress suit and a red nose, who acted as waiter when he was not singing, and sung when he was not waiting.

The customary small tables, smeary with the marks of many tumblers and surrounded by wooden-bottomed chairs, completed the furniture of the hall.

The red-nosed singer was moving around, putting the chairs straight, while Mooney Baggs himself, a short, thick-set personage, with an enormous diamond in his shirt-bosom and another on one of his chubby fingers, walked up and down, with a cigar between his teeth and his eyes bent on the ground, as if in deep reflection.

Some half-dozen patrons of the house lounged around the room, killing time until the stage performance should commence, and there was a generally tired appearance overhanging everything.

"Where's Mooney?" asked a gruff voice in the bar-room.

"Well, he's here, tending to business," sung out Mooney. "You'll always find him at the post of duty, and don't you forget it. Why don't you come in, Jim Cripps. Is there any rope tied to you?"

Jim Cripps banged the screen door open and grasped the hand of Mooney Baggs with more than usual affection.

"Why, Mooney, how goes it, and how's Stretcher to-night? Don't see him around," and Cripps glanced over the room.

"Don't, eh? That's funny. When a man is being made fit for a race it's a pity we don't let him lay around the bar-room for every loafer to get a chance at his drinks."

"What d'yemean?"

"Oh, now, Jim Cripps, you are not a baby on the turf, any more than I am. You have known medicine put into a man that would knock him cold for a month, and do up any training you could put him through. Seems to me you worked a fellow that way yourself once when two Texas boys met for a scrap out in Illinois State," suggested Mooney, with a meaning glance at his companion.

"Well, let's take a drink, anyhow," said Cripps, leading the way to the bar-room.

The two sports disposed of their "benzene" without winking. One drink led to more, and by nine o'clock, when the curtain rose for a bout between the "Russian Sockdolager" and the "London Tapper" both sports felt "comfortable."

"Couldn't you let me see Stretcher a minute?"



asked Cripps. "I have a family matter I want to speak to him about. You know his half-brother was married to my sister-in-law's second cousin, so that Stretcher and I are relations."

"I didn't know that, Jim, but of course if it is true you must love each other very much," and Mooney's grin was assuring.

"You bet your boots we do! Blood is thicker than water, and Stretcher and I'd like to be together all the time."

"What's the time?" asked a muffled voice from under a pile of heavy blankets in a small cot bed, ten minutes later, as Mooney Baggs and Jim Cripps entered a room on the second floor, where Stretcher Bull was kept as carefully guarded as if he were some precious work of art.

"Oh, it's early yet, Stretcher. Here's a relative o' yours as wants to speak to you."

"Where?"

Cripps walked forward with as ingratiating a smile as his bull-dog countenance could assume, and held out his hand to Stretcher.

Stretcher's response was to turn himself around with a bounce, so that the back of his head was turned to the smiling Cripps.

"Don't seem very glad to see you, does he?" remarked Mooney.

Cripps bent down and touched Stretcher on the shoulder.

"Come, Stretcher, turn over and be sociable."

"Ain't feeling sociable to-day, and don't want nothin' to say to you, anyhow. Let me alone and get out! I'm kept here shut up like a wild beast, and I ain't good company for any one. After the 26th of July I'm going to quit rowing. There's no money in it for me, and I don't propose to work for others no more."

"Say, Baggs, can't you let him come down stairs for a while to-night? It will make him feel good and won't do him no harm," pleaded Cripps.

"I dunno," replied Baggs. "Frank Burton left orders that he was not to go out o' this room while he was away, and you know what Frank is if you go back on his orders."

"He wouldn't know nothin' about it. Keep Stretcher up in one corner of the hall. Then if Frank should happen in, we could sneak him up-stairs easily, and nobody would know."

"That's what," put in Stretcher. "I ain't had a drink since I was a kid, seems to me."

"Well, now, you don't get no drink. So that settles that," declared Baggs. "At least, only soft drinks."

"All right, I don't care," returned Stretcher, "as long as I get something to wet my tongue."

A stout, well-formed fellow was Stretcher Bull when he turned out of his cot bed and stood up in his trousers and undershirt. The muscles of his arms could be seen moving sinuously beneath the thin gauze of his shirt-sleeves, and his mighty chest heaved in regular cadence, showing that his wind was in perfect order.

"You are in pretty good condition, eh, Stretcher?" asked Cripps, as he looked the oarsman up and down with a practical eye.

"Oh, a trifle soft, but I'll stiffen up all right when I get to work in the boat," was Stretcher's reply, as he threw on a heavy sack coat. "They are sweating down my weight and it tells on a man."

When the three men took their places in a retired corner of the hall down-stairs the red-nosed waiter was singing "Only a Pansy Blossom" with a nasal intonation that was very effective, but did not procure him an encore.

Then the master of ceremonies stepped on the stake and announced that professor Holdum of Chicago would wrestle three falls "catch-as-catch-can" with any gentleman in the hall.

A carpet was hastily spread on the stage and Professor Holdum himself, airily attired in white drawers and undershirt, and with bare feet, stepped on the stage.

There was a silence, for Professor Holdum was known as a holy terror, and no one seemed anxious to tackle him.

"Can't he git a man to face me? Hi! Hassure you, gentlemen, hi won't hurt you," the professor announced, encouragingly.

"I'll try it," said a voice at the back of the hall.

"Come hon, then. What'll hit be for—love or money?"

"Which you like."

"No money on it, gentlemen. We only give exhibitions her, remember," called out the master of ceremonies, suddenly appearing on the stage to say this, and then retiring.

The hardy individual who thus offered himself as a prey for the professor, walked toward the stage, the center of all eyes. A youngster of eighteen, with blonde hair and short curls—in fact, no other than the young fellow who had referred to himself as "Owney the Oarsman."

"Looks tough as hickory," was Stretcher's comment, as Owney took his place on the stage in shirt and drawers, ready for the struggle.

The wrestlers fell into the regulation position, each bending forward until their foreheads touched, while their hands moved stealthily but rapidly, as they "felt for a hold."

Suddenly the right hand of the professor shot out like lightning, and grasped Owney by the neck, while a twist of the professor's foot took his antagonist's right leg from under him.

The two fell to the floor, but Owney was not "thrown" in the technical sense of the word.

Both shoulders and one hip, or both hips and one shoulder must touch the floor before the referee would grant a "fall" to the professor, and this appeared to be more than he could force on Owney.

The two gladiators writhed and struggled in fierce

contest on the floor of the stage. Sometimes the professor, with a tug, would get Owney on his back, but before he could push him flat down, the boy would "bridge" himself—that is, brace himself on his hands and heels—where he could bid defiance to the professor.

"That boy is a good one, I tell you!" decided Stretcher, who was following every move in the contest with deep interest. "Who is he?"

"Dunno," answered Baggs. "Never saw him before. But he is giving the professor a tussle, sure."

"Hi, there! the boy has thrown him!" yelled Cripps, as a storm of applause broke from the crowd.

"One fall for the stranger," announced the master of ceremonies, and the two contestants sat down at opposite sides of the stage to get their wind for the second bout.

"I thought I'd 'git thar,'" the young athlete remarked.

Once more the professor and Owney faced each other.

There was a dangerous gleam in the professor's eye now. He did not like being laid low by a mere boy, and it was evident that he would try his utmost this time to turn the tables.

In a few seconds the wrestlers were in each other's grasp again, tugging, pulling, twisting, panting. Owney had the professor down, underneath, and was trying hard to push him back, when suddenly a little man with pinched features dashed on the stage and seized Owney by the back of the neck. At the same moment the professor, with a superhuman effort, lifted the boy off his feet, threw him over his head, and flung him, senseless, flat on his back on the stage.

"Foul! Foul!" shrieked Stretcher Bull, as he broke away from Mooney Baggs and Jim Cripps, and clearing the rope stretched across the stage at a bound, sprung upon the little man.

"Stand off!" warned the little man, who was no other than Scrawny Will. "Stand off! I know what I am doing."

"So do I," retorted Stretcher Bull, as with one blow of his brawny fist he sent Scrawny flying across the stage.

Stretcher was not to have it all his own way, however.

Jim Cripps, always spoiling for a fight, was on the stage almost as soon as Stretcher.

Instinctively everybody in the hall became silent. They knew that a desperate combat was impending, and that Stretcher and Cripps were well matched.

"What did yer hit the man for?"

"None o' yer business."

The question and answer were given short and sharp, like pistol-shots; then there was a crash, as the men came together.

Half a dozen sledge-hammer blows were exchanged, and Stretcher's face was covered with blood.

Then the master of ceremonies rushed between the combatants.

"Hold!" cried an authoritative voice, sounding loud and clear above the din, as Frank Burton stepped on the stage, cool as a cucumber, but with an air of quiet command that showed he was accustomed to obedience from those he addressed.

Stretcher Bull tried to shirk away, but Burton put his hand on his shoulder.

"Go up-stairs, Stretcher! I will see you later."

As Mooney Baggs led the discomfited oarsman from the room, Burton and Scrawny stood face to face.

"What are you doing here with my man?" asked the former, fiercely.

"Nothing. I was looking after my property. This boy belongs to me, and I want to know what you were doing with him?"

"What boy do you mean?"

"Why, this boy, that you trapped into this place to spoil him. The boy lying over in that corner."

Scrawny stepped over to the spot in the shadow of the wings. Then he started back with an exclamation of astonishment that he could not repress.

Owney had disappeared, and what Scrawny had supposed was the boy, turned out to be only the professor's clothes, which he had thrown there when he stripped for the wrestling contest.

"Where is he?" shrieked Scrawny.

No one could answer the question, not even the shabby-gentle man, who might have been a book-agent out of luck, who was quietly passing through the outer door of the saloon at this moment.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE DIAMOND NECKLACE.

THE young oarsman, secure in his disguise as the shabby-gentle man, walked slowly up-town to Union Square thinking deeply. His thoughts were of a mixed character, and perhaps the reader will be surprised to learn were not altogether of wrestling, boat racing and kindred matters. They took a turn entirely independent of such things, as the following muttered thoughts will show:

"I must strike a clew very soon, or it will be too late. It is a great piece of luck, Scrawny Will's taking hold of me for a rowing match, because it enables me to combine business with pleasure. I shall have to explain my presence in New York in some way. It was the funniest thing I ever saw in my life, his look of astonishment and disgust when he caught sight of me on the stage at Baggs's! I wish I had not been quite so forward about wrestling with that English professor. It may give me trouble yet, but I never could keep quiet when there was a little sport in the wind. That was a heavy fall I got that time. It stunned me for the moment. I expect Scrawny thinks I was nearly killed."

The young man laughed to himself at the idea of

a fall on his head being sufficient to crush out his vigorous young life. Then he looked around as if expecting to meet some one.

"Well?"

It was a woman's voice.

"Nothing, so far," replied the man as he turned around and saw, in the bright glare of an electric light, a lady and gentleman, both elegantly dressed, and with that indescribable suggestion of a life in which money is lightly made and lightly spent, which distinguishes the majority of theatrical people.

The lady and gentleman were husband and wife—two of the best known and most popular artists on the American stage.

"You are working up the case, I suppose?" the lady asked.

"Certainly."

"And you think you will recover the diamonds?"

"I hope so, as soon as I catch the thief. But it is never certain. The stones may be on their way to Europe by this time."

The lady tossed her head impatiently.

"You know I will pay well for the recovery of the necklace," she said, "especially if I can get it in its original form, with the setting not touched. As for the thief, I do not care anything about him. He may go if I only get my diamonds."

"I will do the best I can," said Owney, "but I am afraid you will only get the stones, without the setting. That has been melted down long ago. As for the thief, you may push the case against him or not, just as you please, but it will be a strange thing to me if I do not know something about him that will be enough to hold him or whoever he is. My motto always is to git thar."

"Well, we cannot stand talking here," said the gentleman, speaking for the first time. "Let us go into Ricadonna's and have some supper. Then you can tell us all about it."

"I have nothing to tell at present," returned Owney with a smile, "but I do not mind eating a little supper. I was just thinking of taking some refreshment."

The three stepped across the square to the well-known Italian restaurant and seated themselves at a table in the rear of the long room. Owney with his back to the entrance, but facing a huge mirror on the wall, so that he could see everything transpiring in the restaurant.

The room was crowded. It was past eleven o'clock by this time and a number of little supper parties, composed of people who had been to the different theaters, occupied the tables.

"Well, now," said the lady, when the waiter had put the first course before the party, "what have you found out about the diamonds?"

"As I told you before, nothing," replied Owney.

"You say the necklace was taken from your trunk after nine o'clock on Saturday evening, when you took it off your neck in the theater in Pittsburg, and that you did not miss it until noon on Monday, when you opened the trunk in the theater in New York."

"Yes."

"Do you not generally make sure that your jewels are safe before you lock your trunk? To me it seems a dangerous thing to leave five thousand dollars' worth of diamonds in a trunk at all," said Owney.

It was a noticeable fact that the young oarsman, when he put on the ring and assumed the disguise of the shabby-gentle book-agent, managed to drop all the characteristics of a young and active athlete, and to appear in very truth a seedy man of middle age with whom the world had gone hard. Just now, talking earnestly, he was full of business, and there was nothing in him to suggest the lithe, steel-muscled opponent of the professor of wrestling an hour or so ago.

"I do not often leave my diamonds in the trunk," said the lady in reply to his last remark; "therefore, it makes me think that they were taken by some one who either saw me put them there or found out in some way that I had done so."

"Did you inquire at the theater and hotel?"

"Of course. I telegraphed at once," put in the gentleman.

"And the result?"

"Nothing."

"What did you do next?"

"Put the case in your hands."

"Quite right."

"If I understand you correctly, you have no doubt about being able to eventually find the stones, at least," said the lady.

"I do not say that, altogether," returned Owney, "because no one can be quite sure of success, but I have my suspicions with regard to their present whereabouts, though the suspicion is such a vague one that I do not feel justified in calling it a clew. But I will git thar if possible."

There was a slight bustle in the restaurant at this moment, as two persons were shown to a small table just vacated on the right hand side of the room, and almost behind Owney.

"But what are your suspicions founded on?" asked the lady when the bustle had somewhat subsided.

Owney did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the new-comers in the mirror.

They were evidently from the country. A man and a young girl—he an elderly, hard-visaged individual, who might have been a prosperous farmer—she a young girl, shrinking, rosy-cheeked and blue-eyed, who seemed to feel sadly out of place in the crowded restaurant, with its lights, its mirrors, its gay decorations and its loud-talking and laughing company.

"Father," she was saying, "when are we going home?"



"Home?" repeated the hard-visaged man. "Why are you in such a hurry to go home? You always wanted to come to New York to see the sights, and now you are here, going to theaters and having a general good time with your father, you are always wanting to go home."

"No, I am not, father. I only asked you. I am enjoying myself very much."

"You are, eh?" was the surly response. "Well, eat your supper as if you liked it and don't worry."

"Miss Vavasour," said Owney, addressing the lady by her name—her stage designation—for the first time, "I think I shall be able to give you some news of your diamonds within a week."

"Do you think so?" responded Miss Vavasour, delightedly.

"You must not be disappointed if I do not," remarked Owney, "but I hope to have good news for you in that time."

The farmer and his daughter were quietly eating some cakes and ice-cream, the farmer washing it down with claret.

Owney was looking in the face of the girl in the mirror, but without her observing him.

"Where have I seen that face before?" he asked himself as he played with the spoon in his coffee, which the waiter had just set before him.

Miss Vavasour and her husband professionally known as Basil Montgomery was chatting away on theatrical subjects, unmindful of Owney, who was too much absorbed in contemplation of the face of the girl behind him to join in the conversation, even if he had been interested in the theme.

Suddenly he started as his eyes dilated with astonishment.

Miss Vavasour and Basil Montgomery continued to chatter away and did not notice him.

The farmer was slowly sipping his claret, while the girl looked timidly in his face occasionally, as if mutely appealing to him to take her home.

She had thrown open a light opera shawl which rested on her shoulders, and it was when she made this movement that Owney had started.

"Always something coming up when you least expect it," thought Owney. "I'll git thar yet."

"Well, Mr. Pearson," said Basil Montgomery, as Miss Vavasour signified her desire to go home, "if you have anything more to communicate, you can find us at our old address, on 37½ street."

The two got up, said good-by to Owney, glanced carelessly at the farmer and his daughter as they passed and disappeared.

Owney Pearson, took out a notebook and selected a certain page for reference.

"Here it is," he said, June 25th. Have a reed to row a match on the Hulton course with any one—William Skinner, known as 'Scrawny Will,' shall select—I to receive five hundred dollars if I win, with all my expenses for training, etc., and fifty dollars as payment for my services in any event. That is all right as far as it goes," he added, as he returned the notebook to his pocket. "But I must take care that it does not interfere too much with my business. Scrawny Will is a deep one, and he will try and use me as if I were a mere machine unless I teach him that I have some will of my own."

The farmer at the table behind him had finished his claret, and was stretching himself as if in preparation for departure.

Owney watched him closely.

"You had better fasten that shawl of yours," said the farmer, in his gruff tones to the young girl.

"Yes, father."

She lifted her hand to grasp the end of the shawl, and again Owney started, with the look of intense astonishment that had passed over his face once before.

"Surely I saw it," he thought.

"Are you ready?" asked the farmer of his daughter.

"Yes, father."

"Well, come on, then."

He walked over to the desk to pay for his refreshments, and the young girl fastened her shawl.

"I must find out whether I was right, somehow," thought Owney.

He glanced at himself in the mirror and saw that, as a seedy book-agent, his appearance was not very prepossessing; he would frighten the girl if he spoke to her, even supposing he had a good excuse.

What should he do?

The farmer was still at the desk, waiting for his change, and had his back to the table where the young girl sat arranging her shawl.

Owney was quick at expedients.

The girl's handkerchief lay at the edge of the table. He got up, walked carelessly past, and managed to brush the handkerchief to the floor with his coat; then immediately stooped and returned it, with a bow.

The girl thanked him, and was passing on. Then, he paused suddenly, and said:

"I beg your pardon; I think that pin in your collar is unfastened, and you may lose it."

She put up her hands to her throat, displacing the shawl a little as she did so.

Owney's eyes dilated as he turned away and toward the desk, meeting the farmer's face to face.

"By gracious! I was right," muttered Owney to himself. "Now what am I to do?"

What was it that had caused him so much astonishment, and what was the suspicion that had been verified when the girl had fastened the pin at her throat?

She wore the stolen diamond necklace around her neck.

There was no doubt about it.

Owney had had it carefully described to him, and could not be mistaken.

It consisted of three pendants, the one in the cen-

ter being made up of one large stone surrounded by smaller, the whole in the shape of a heart. Those on each side were a cross and anchor respectively, the three representing the emblems of Faith, Hope and Charity. There was yet another peculiarity about the necklace—one which made Owney quite certain as to its identity. Standing out distinctively from the string of stones that formed the necklace proper, and apparently supporting the center pendant, was a superb emerald. Its rich green hues were shown to advantage among the ever-changing rays of light from the diamonds, and attracted the attention of the observer despite his will.

How had this young and apparently innocent girl come into possession of the jewels?

Owney could see only one solution of the riddle, and that was that, if she were not a thief herself, she had been made the tool of unscrupulous people.

One thing was certain. He must never let the girl out of his sight until he gained possession of the necklace.

He could have arrested her then, but he felt sure somehow that she was not the guilty one, and though he desired to regain the property, he looked upon the arrest of the thief as at least of as much importance.

He stood at the desk and asked what he had to pay, but was told by the cashier that the gentleman with him had settled for everything.

"Do you know that person who just paid that bill, and who is with that young lady over there?" asked Owney, carelessly.

The cashier was an old New Yorker and knew all about confidence-men, bunco-steerers, and such like, and Owney, in his book-agent character, did not look very prepossessing. So he answered rather shortly:

"Farmer, I guess, but I do not know him. He may be a detective for aught I know. The police put on strange disguises sometimes."

"Exactly."

Owney smiled an inward smile as he thought how near the cashier had hit the mark about police officers and their disguises.

The farmer was near the door, and Owney turned away from the desk to keep him and his daughter in sight, while the cashier at his desk watched him suspiciously.

"Guess he will rope the old fellow in," thought the cashier. "I can't help it, though. It is none of my business, and New York is a place where a stranger must take his chances."

Down the steps to the street went the farmer and daughter, Owney close behind.

There might be trouble before the night was through, and Owney felt in his pockets to make sure that his pistol, handcuffs and other articles he might need, were handy, and that his credentials as a sworn officer of the law were safe in his inside pocket.

"Guess you want to go to bed, don't you, May?" said the farmer.

"Yes, father, I am very tired."

"Well, we will go down to the Sinclair House and you can go to bed. We will go home to-morrow probably."

"Crook Cripps, I want you," suddenly came from the lips of a quiet-looking man, rather below the medium height and with the appearance of a solid merchant as he placed his hand on the farmer's shoulder.

The farmer glanced hastily over his shoulder with the half-terrified, half-defiant look of a hunted animal. Then, with a mighty effort, he tore himself loose, aimed a blow at the quiet-looking man's face which fell short, and sped down toward Fourth avenue at the top of his speed, with the quiet-looking man and a dozen others in pursuit.

The whole incident had taken place in a few seconds, and Owney had never taken his eyes off the girl.

She seemed dazed and faint, as Owney put out his hand to save her from falling and found himself alone with the possessor of the diamond necklace who seemed to be now utterly friendless, late at night in the heart of a great city.

"Here's a pretty fix," said Git Thar Owney.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### HOW SCRAWNY WILL AND CROOK CRIPPS FOUND THEMSELVES IN A TIGHT PLACE.

WHEN Scrawny Will recognized the fact that Owney had given them all the slip, his weakened features were distorted almost out of all resemblance to humanity by disappointment, rage and mystification.

He looked at Frank Burton scowlingly, but it was evident that the latter's ailed in the general astonishment, and knew no more what had become of Owney than any one else in the room.

The spectators in the body of the hall who had risen to their feet in the excitement of the moment, had quietly settled back in their seats. A row more or less at Baggs's was not a thing to make a lasting impression.

Stretcher Bull having obeyed the order to go upstairs was out of sight, and Jim Cripps stood at one side of the stage waiting anxiously for the next move of Scrawny Will, who somehow held the giant in complete subjection.

"Get out of this!" was Scrawny Will's order to Cripps.

"Where shall I go?"

"To the—"

Cripps did not ask for the conclusion of the sentence, but snatched off the stage and sat down at a table in the rear of the room, where he could keep his eyes on Scrawny Will without being near enough

to get a snub occasionally from the irascible little man.

"Now, Frank Burton, what have you done with my boy?" asked Scrawny Will, as the two moved to the side of the stage, out of sight of the audience, while the master-of-ceremonies announced a song by the red-nosed waiter.

"What boy?"

"Why, the boy who was wrestling with that professor, as he calls himself."

"I told you before that I do not know anything about him, and I repeat it. Now, I do not want you to ask me that question again. If you do there will be trouble, and you know what that means when Frank Burton says it."

Scrawny Will looked straight into Frank Burton's eyes, and the latter returned the glance unflinchingly.

Frank Burton was undoubtedly speaking the truth.

"I believe you," said Scrawny. "Shake!"

The two shook hands and came down through a side door into the auditorium.

Frank Burton went up-stairs to see Stretcher Bull, while Scrawny looked around for Jim Cripps.

"Are you looking for me, captain?" asked Cripps, as he stepped up in front of the little man.

"Yes. Come along."

"Wait a minute. I've just ordered a lemonade," said the pugilist. "Have one with me."

"No. We have something else to do besides drinking," was the stern reply. "Let the lemonades go."

Jim Cripps did not like this arrangement, but he dared not resist the orders of the little man, who held him down with such an iron hand, despite the pugilist's brute strength, so he followed him into the street submissively.

"You are starting in well to earn that five hundred dollars, ain't you?" said Scrawny, sarcastically, as soon as the two were outside.

"Well, how could I help it?"

"Did you say anything at all to Stretcher?"

"No. How could I? I'd jist got him down-stairs, and was jist goin' to spring the lay on him when that there professor commenced a poundin' and an a-wrestling with the young feller. Then you come in an' interfered, an' Stretcher jumped onter you, and I jumped on ter Stretcher, and there we all was."

"Well, you will have a harder job now than ever, because Burton will watch his man closer, but you must get at him somehow. He must not win that race, I have too much up already on the unknown."

"Well, what are yer lettin' yer unknown go 'roun' the Bowery at nights for? Don't ye think it may spile him a little?"

"Yes. Confound him! I thought he was safe in Pittsburg. You never know when you have these young fellows. I must find out where he is and take care of him myself until I want to use him. That is one thing I want you for—to help me find him. I will telegraph to Pittsburg in the morning and see if I can learn anything about him. I really do not know much about him anyhow save that he lives there with his widowed mother."

Cripps was about to say something in reply when a farmer-looking man, walking swiftly toward them jostled Jim Cripps rather rudely.

"Where are yer shovin'?" was the latter's indignant query.

"What's that?" said the stranger.

Then he started back with a cry of recognition.

"Why, Jim!"

"Hullo, Josh!"

"Hush, the cops are after me, on that Montville bank job."

"Shut yer mouth, can't yer," said Jim Cripps, looking fearfully around. "Don't ye see as there is a gentleman present, and it isn't perlit to talk over family matters before him?"

"Isn't he onto the racket?"

"Scrawny, this is my brother, Josh, generally known as Crook Cripps, 'cause his big toe is a little crooked," said Jim, with a grin. "Josh, let me make you acquainted with Scrawny Will, a square man and a sport from the ground up."

The two men shook hands, and then Crook Cripps said:

"Jim, those cops are not far off, and I had to leave May by herself on the street in Union Square."

"By herself?"

"Yes, I could not do anything else."

"Dangerous for a young girl."

"I know it, but the cop had his hand on my shoulder and I just had to run."

Scrawny stood quite still during the foregoing conversation. He prided himself on being a square man, who never did anything to make him afraid of a policeman. At the same time he was not above associating to some extent with those who put their hands to shady jobs, when it suited his purpose, so that it was generally considered safe to talk before him.

"Now, what do you propose to do?" inquired Scrawny.

"Go back by a roundabout way and look for May," said Crook. "I can't leave the girl by herself without trying to find her."

The three turned into a side street, and walked rapidly in the direction of Union Square.

Scrawny was looking for Owney, and he thought he would be just as likely to come across him in one direction as another. He had no particular expectation of finding him on the street, but he felt too nervous and excited to sleep, and trisk walking suited him better than anything else.

"Look out! Separate!" suddenly cried Crook, as he made a dive for an open doorway they then chanced to be passing.



Scrawny, hardly knowing what he did, followed Crook Cripps into the doorway and hastily but softly closed the door.

He found himself in darkness black as Erebus, through which he could hear the rapid but suppressed breathing of Cripps.

There was the noise of feet outside the door, and then a voice said:

"They must have gone into one of these houses. I saw three of them, and one I would swear was Crook."

"What would he be doing around here?" asked another voice. "Didn't you have your hand on him in Union Square not an hour ago?"

"I know it, and didn't he get away from me? I tell you he is in one of these houses, and I am going to have him out. He is too good a haul for me to let him go when I have him right in my grasp."

There was a subdued rattling as a key entered the lock.

"Why didn't I bolt that door?" muttered Scrawny to himself. "This is a nice position for a square man to find himself in."

The fumbling at the lock continued, but so far the door had kept fastened.

"Suppose we will either be arrested or shot for burglars," grumbled Scrawny, under his breath. "Darned if I won't make that big fool, Jim Cripps, pay for this!"

The place was evidently a large boarding-house, where the sound of people walking about the hall and stairs at all hours of the night and morning was too common to excite comment or inquiry.

"Cripps!" whispered Scrawny, softly.

"Well?" replied that worthy.

"Where are you?"

"At the foot of the stairs."

"What are we to do?"

"Dunno. The cops will be in here directly. They seem to know where we are," returned Crook Cripps, as he moved quietly up two or three stairs.

He had made up his mind to a plan of action and Scrawny would have to look out for himself.

The old saying that there is "honor among thieves" has been long since proved to be a mere empty phrase. Your professional crook is an essentially selfish creature, and will as a rule sell his best friend to save himself.

Scrawny was crawling along the wall toward the staircase. He, too, had resolved to seek safety by way of the stairs.

The fumbling at the door continued.

The officer was evidently determined to gain admittance and without disturbing the inmates of the house.

Crash!

The door flew open suddenly, and the stout, quiet-looking man, who had attempted to arrest Crook Cripps in Union Square tumbled headlong into the hall, closely followed by a tall, slim officer, apparently under command of his companion.

There was a scuffling on the stairs, as Cripps and Scrawny tumbled against each other in their mad haste to retreat.

"There they are!" ejaculated the stout officer. "Where is your lantern?"

The slim man produced a bull's-eye lantern, and turned the light on the top of the first flight of stairs where two pairs of heels were just disappearing around the corner.

Up the stairs ran Scrawny and Cripps, and after them went the two officers.

There were no carpets on the stairs and the shoes of pursuers and pursued made a tremendous noise. But it did not seem to disturb any of the sleepers in the house.

Scrawny and Cripps both had the same object in view—to reach the top floor and thence get to the roof.

Once among the chimneys, sloping roofs and parapets, they hoped to be able to give the officers the slip.

"It's no use, Crook Cripps; the game is up," puffed the stout officer, as the rays of the lantern showed the former like habilitments of the former whisking around the corner of the last flight.

"Dunno about that," muttered Cripps, between his set teeth. "I'll have a fight for it, anyhow."

He reached the top floor and looked up in the dim light derived from a window on the staircase.

There was the trap-door leading to the roof, half-open, and just struggling through it by the aid of a rope, was Scrawny Will.

The rope was still hanging down, and Cripps grasped it.

Then, it was snatched from his hands from above, as the trap shut with a bang.

"Surrender, Crook," said the officer once more, presenting a pistol full at Cripps's face.

"Never!" shouted Cripps. "You haven't got me yet, Tom Blodgett."

He threw himself upon the officer and seized the pistol hand, while he shot out his foot and entangled it in the slim man's long legs.

Down went the slim man in the corner, while Cripps and the stout officer, Tom Blodgett, struggled desperately for the possession of the pistol.

They swayed to and fro on the narrow landing, but without saying a word, and not making as much noise as might have been expected.

It was more a dead solid pull—a direct trial of the comparative strength of muscle between the two men—than anything else.

The slim officer was wedged in between a table in the corner and the wall, and could give no assistance to his brother officer.

Cripps seemed to have sinews of steel and Tom Blodgett could not get his pistol turned on his adversary for a second.

At last, by a superhuman effort, Blodgett forced

Cripps back until he fell against the stair-railing that protected the edge of the landing.

There was a crackling noise, an ejaculation from both the officer and his adversary and down went Cripps to the stairs below, while Blodgett just managed to save himself from plunging over also.

The stair rail had been smashed and torn into splinters.

Cripps, by sheer good luck, had fallen on his feet.

He was unhurt.

"By Caesar! he shall not get away," said Blodgett, as he leveled his pistol at Cripps's flying form and fired.

The ball tore into the wall at the side of Cripps and sent the plaster in all directions, but did no further damage.

"Not yet, Tom Blodgett," yelled Cripps, with a sneering laugh, as he reached the hall and dashed toward the street.

The door was open, and Cripps was safe for the present.

"Fooled, by gracious!" said Blodgett, as accompanied by the slim officer, he walked slowly down the stairs, in a blaze of light derived from a dozen lamps and candles in the hands of boarders who had come out to see what the firing and scuffling meant.

"What is all this?" said one stout lady in a long crazy-patch wrapper, who was evidently the landlady.

"Police!" was the reply. "Please call at the 106th Precinct Station in the morning, and you will be recompensed for damage," said Officer Tom Blodgett. "Sorry to have disturbed you. Good-night."

And no one noticed that standing in the doorway of a room on the top floor, where the scuffle between Blodgett and Cripps had taken place, was a pale, frightened girl, who had seen her father in deadly peril, and yet had not dared to say or do anything in his behalf.

The pale, frightened girl was Crook Cripps's daughter May, whom we last saw standing in Union Square at midnight, with "Git Thar Owney," the Oarsman.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### OWNEY GETS A CLEW AND LOSES IT.

WHEN Crook Cripps beat such a hasty retreat from Union Square, with the officers in pursuit, leaving his daughter to fate, Owney felt that he had struck good luck, even if attended by embarrassing circumstances.

He had seen a valuable diamond necklace (the hope of recovering which had brought him to New York) around May's neck, and he argued that as long as he had his eye on her he was sure to be near the necklace, and could claim it whenever he saw proper to do so.

"Your father has left you rather unceremoniously. Where do you live?" asked Owney, when the young girl had a little recovered herself, and was looking helplessly around.

"I do not know," she answered, simply. "We live in Pittsburg when we are at home, but in New York I only go where my father takes me. We arrived here yesterday morning, and he said he was going back to-morrow. But now—he—he—seems to have got into some trouble, and I don't know what to do."

The girl wrung her hands in an agony of terror as the full realization of her situation seemed to overwhelm her.

Owney's heart was touched.

He was only twenty years of age, and looked a good deal younger, and though he had been a detective for two years past, and in that time had seen enough of crime and misery to make him callous under ordinary circumstances, he never could gaze on innocence or distress unmoved.

His youthful appearance had acquired for him the sobriquet of the "Infant Detective," but his prowess in all kinds of athletic sport, particularly rowing, proved that he was anything but an "infant" as far as thew and sinew were concerned.

"What hotel has your father been stopping at?" asked Owney.

"We did not stop at any hotel, but at a private house somewhere near Sixth avenue," replied the girl. "He said to-night that we should go to—the Sinclair House. I think was the name."

"Well, you had better let me take you there, so that you can find out if he has made any arrangements for you," said Owney. "My name is Wilson, and I am a drygoods clerk."

Owney wished to reassure the young girl, even though he felt compelled not to disclose his real name.

But he need not have troubled himself. May Cripps was too innocent and unsophisticated to have any fear.

She accepted Owney's offer, and trotted away with him to the Sinclair House as trustingly as if she had known him all her life.

They walked through Union Square and turned the corner of Fourteenth street into Broadway.

That part of the city was lively enough, as it always is in the summer, and Owney and his companion threaded their way among the couples going home from the theaters, knots of young men making a night of it, and raising as much noise as they dared in the presence of the members of the Broadway police slowly perambulating the stately thoroughfare, and the miscellaneous wayfarers indigenous to the metropolis.

"What is your father's business?" asked Owney.

"He is an agent."

"What kind of an agent?"

"I don't know."

"Um!"

"A general agent, I have heard him say," added the girl.

"Mighty convenient business, an agent," muttered Owney to himself.

"Does he often come to New York?"

"Oh, yes; very often."

"I thought so," was Owney's inward remark.

"By the way," said Owney, aloud, "I saw that you had a very pretty necklace on when you were sitting in the restaurant. I suppose it was a present from your father."

"No," returned the girl. "He did not give it to me. He only told me I could wear it a little while. It does not belong to him, he says. It is my Uncle Jim's, and he brought it to New York to give him."

Owney pricked up his ears.

"Where is your Uncle Jim?"

"He lives somewhere in New York, but we have not seen him since we have been here."

Owney whistled softly to himself.

He did not believe the young girl knew anything about her father's misdoings.

Had he thought so he would have put her under arrest at once.

But he felt sure that with her unconscious assistance, he would be able to unearth a nest of thieves who had engineered more than one neat job in Pittsburg and surrounding towns.

Of course it was possible that he might be mistaken in the girl, and that she was playing a deep game to throw him off the scent, but he could not look into her child-like face and harbor such a suspicion, and he dismissed it as utterly unworthy of a second thought.

"Oh, look!" suddenly shrieked May, as she started back in horror and pointed to the horses of a carriage that was coming briskly toward them.

They were spirited animals and the colored coachman, half-asleep, did not seem to have them as thoroughly in hand as he should.

They were clattering over the stones, tossing their heads and evidently in a hurry to get home.

But what had caused May to utter her cry of dismay was the danger of a woman who had slipped down on the road just in front of the prancing, rearing horses.

The driver saw the prostrate woman just as May cried out, and tried his utmost to hold his horses back.

His efforts were futile, however. It seemed as if nothing could save her from being trampled to death.

With one bound Owney was in the road.

One hand grasped the bridle of the nearest horse, while the other, with a mighty pull, lifted the woman out of danger.

The horses dashed on, setting the coachman at defiance, and the wheels grazed the temple of the woman as she lay on the stones.

It was a narrow escape.

Owney assisted her to her feet, and saw that she was a comfortable-looking matron of perhaps fifty years of age.

"Indeed, then, sir, I'm much obliged to you. If you hadn't hauled me away just when you did, them pesky critters would have put their feet right on me chest and I would have been smashed flat as a griddle-cake."

"Glad to have been of service to you," said Owney.

"Service, is it? 'Deed then, it was a service, and if there is anything that Mandy Wilkins can do for you, why just call at my house over on—"

Owney did not catch any more, because he ran hastily to the sidewalk where he had left May.

She had stepped back toward the houses when Owney ran into the road, and was so intent on his movements that she had not noticed two flashily-dressed young men who had stopped too, and were now staring one on each side of her.

But Owney noticed them.

He suspected mischief, and that was why he did not wait for the conclusion of Amanda Wilkins's remarks.

But he was too late.

The young men disappeared before he could get to May's side.

Where had they gone?

Owney looked at a door which apparently belonged to a respectable picture-store, and understood at once where the young men had gone.

He also knew that it would be no easy matter to catch them now, even if he wanted them.

"What did those fellows say to you?" he asked May.

"Nothing."

"Ah, the impudent rascals! It is a wonder they didn't," said the matron, joining in the conversation. "I guess they were just pickpockets. They scare me most to death, especially when I'm out late like this. I've just been over to Sixth avenue to see my daughter, which is very ill, and I must be getting home, and you'd better be making your father there take you home, too. It's no time of night for a young thing like you to be on the street."

Owney smiled to himself at the idea of his being taken for the father of a girl only two or three years younger than himself; but the old lady's mistake proved to him that his disguise was a good one, and he was satisfied.

The smile soon faded, however.

An exclamation from May checked every tendency to mirth in his bosom.

"My necklace!"

"What!" screamed Owney.

"My necklace!"

"Well?"

"It is gone!"

"Gone?"



"Gone—lost—stolen!" wailed the girl.  
"Hey-day! What is all this?" said the old lady, lifting up her hands in astonishment.

"Are you sure it is gone?" asked Owney. "Feel carefully around your neck."

Though Owney told her to feel for the necklace as a forlorn hope, he felt too certain that it was indeed stolen to expect that May was mistaken.

The two young men who had stood for an instant so close to the girl bore to his experienced eye unmistakable evidences of being swell pickpockets.

He knew, too, that their delicate, trained fingers could easily remove the necklace on that instant without May having the least warning that she was being robbed.

"Yes, it is gone," announced May, after a feverish search about her neck and in the folds of her shawl and dress. "Oh, my! what shall I do? My father gone! I don't know where, and now Uncle Jim's necklace gone!"

"Keep up your courage," said Owney. "Things will be all right to-morrow, no doubt."

"Where's her father gone?" put in Amanda Wilkins. "Ain't you her father? What's all this? Things seem to be all mixed up like."

Owney explained in a few words, saying that he was a stranger to the young lady, but wanted to place her somewhere in safety for the night, and help her to search for her father in the morning.

"Well, let her come home with me. I keep a boarding-house just off Fourth avenue, and I can give her a bed for the night. It is no use bothering about hotels. It is time she was in bed, and she will be better in a private house than in a great big hotel. She can sleep with my daughter Juliana, and then to-morrow we can see what is best to be done."

Both May and Owney were glad to accept the offer of the kind-hearted Mrs. Wilkins, and in another fifteen minutes Owney had left them at the door of the boarding-house, which the reader has already visited in company with Scrawny Will and Crook Cripps.

"Now for that necklace," thought Owney. "It seems to me I am playing to terribly hard luck all around, but I'll get on the trail of those two young fellows as sure as my name is Owney Pearson. I'll show them that the 'Infant Detective' has cut his eye-teeth anyhow, and that he can keep his end up in New York as well as in Pittsburg."

He walked briskly along, as if he had a certain destination in view.

So he had.  
He retraced his steps to the spot where May had discovered the loss of the diamond necklace.

The house looked quiet, and might have been quite empty for anything that could be seen from the outside. The door through which the two pickpockets had been apparently swallowed up was securely shut and fastened.

But Owney had been through that doorway before and knew the trick of it.

There was a rusty nail driven into the door-post so that only just the head showed.

Owney put his finger on the nail-head, and in another moment or two the big door swung noiselessly open.

"Great thing, electricity," muttered Owney.

When the door opened it disclosed a long, dark hallway, at the end of which was a glass door with the words "Sample Room" painted on it.

It was the place in which Scrawny Will and Jim Cripps had held their conference when Cripps was so disturbed over the mysterious reference to the Montville Bank job, uttered by an unknown voice.

The red-headed bartender was alone and was still playing that interminable game of solitaire.

He looked up and nodded carelessly at Owney as the latter entered.

"Any of the boys been here to-night?" asked Owney.

The red-headed bartender gave the other a swift glance of suspicion.

"What boys?" he asked, in a surly tone. "Dunno what boys yer mean. There has been one or two gentlemen here to-night, but they has all gone, and I was just a-thinkin' of goin' myself. I've been here since noon, and I'm tired."

"Who have you got in that room?" said Owney sharply, looking full in the bartender's sleepy eyes, and pointing toward the little closet where Scrawny Will and Jim Cripps had had their conversation in relation to Stretcher Bull.

"No one," said the bartender.

"Let me see," said Owney.

"Can't yer take a feller's word for it?" asked the other. "Do yer mean to insinuate that I'm a liar?"

Owney did not answer.  
He walked over to the little room and pushed the door.

As he expected it was fastened.

"There is some one in that room," said Owney the Oarsman.

"Is there? Well who'd have thought it?" remarked the bartender sneeringly. "And if there is, have you got any right to push your way into a private party?"

Owney stepped close to the bar, leaned over, and in a low voice, said:

"Look here. I have met you before. It was in Western Pennsylvania late at night, in a barn, and you had matches in your hand. I am not alone here, and if you don't want to find yourself in the police-station before morning you had better be civil. Here is the proof of what I say."

Owney drew a small silver badge from an inside pocket and showed that it was his official emblem as a detective.

The bartender was completely cowed.

That attempt at arson to which Owney referred

had always hung over him in the shape of a threat of State Prison.

Owney was sure that the two pickpockets had been in this quiet saloon, even if they were not here now, which he strongly suspected.

In any case he felt that the clew to the diamond necklace must be followed up from here.

Young though he was, he had been through many desperate adventures, and the fact that he was utterly alone in a house of doubtful reputation, in the dead of night, did not turn him from his resolve to find out who was in that little room.

He pushed the door.  
It was firm as a rock to any ordinary exercise of strength.

But Owney the Oarsman was an athlete, and possessed more than ordinary strength.

Drawing his pistol ready for emergencies, he held it in his right hand while he put his knee and his two hands against the door.

He could hear muttering inside the room.

He gave one push with all his might.

There was a crackling as the wood started at the hinges and lock.

Another shove.

The door burst open.

Then—there were two reports as Owney's pistol was twice discharged.

Before he could fire again a sack was thrown over his head, while ropes were pulled around his limbs so tightly that they cut into the flesh, and amid the mocking laughter of three or four men in which he could plainly distinguish the hoarse tones of the red-headed bartender, "Git Thar" Owney realized that he was trapped and helpless.

#### CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FRIEND SAVES SCRAWNY WILL'S LIFE—JIM CRIPPS'S TREACHERY.

"WELL, if things hasn't taken a nice turn," was Scrawny Will's disgusted comment, as he sat down in a gutter between two sloping roofs, after pulling the rope out of Crook Cripps's hands and shutting the trap. "Stretcher Bull not fixed and my own man loafing around New York, taking part in catch-as-catch-can wrestling scraps and playing the deuce with his constitution generally. Lucky thing he always keeps himself in condition, so that a week's training will make him all right for the race. If he loses it I will make it ho. for that blundering fool, Jim Cripps."

In his vexation and excitement he had uttered the last two words aloud.

"Hallo, Cap," said a voice he recognized as that of Jim Cripps himself. "What do you want with me?"

"Where did you come from?" asked Scrawny Will.

"Where did you come from yerself?" was Jim Cripps's response. "I'm surprised at a gen'lman like you sittin' aroun' in dirty gutters on tops o' houses in the moonlight like a cat as has lost its boardin'-house."

"Shut your mouth," said Scrawny Will.

"O' course. Same old chestnut. Shut yer mouth. Pity I wasn't deaf and dumb," grumbled Cripps.

"How did you get up here?" asked Scrawny Will.

"Why I came up through that house on the corner. The cops was gettin' too close to be healthy, and I see the door o' that boardin'-house ajar, and I sort o' quietly sneaked up-stairs and out on the roof. I guessed that was your game, too, and I thought I might meet you here."

"If you'd done that job right with Stretcher Bull we would never have got into this muss," growled Scrawny Will.

"That's right. Blame it all on me."

"Well, it was your fault."

"Not much it wasn't."

"Didn't I tell you to get Stretcher Bull by himself and fix it with him to throw the race?"

"And wasn't I gettin' him by myself, and wouldn't I have fixed him if it hadn't been for you comin' in there and jumping on the stage the way you did?"

"Well, I had to do it."

"Why?"

"Because they would have spoiled that boy if I hadn't interfered."

"I don't see as you've helped things much. You don't know where he is now," suggested Jim Cripps.

"You needn't tell me that. I have you to thank for it as I told you before."

Jim Cripps had been peeping over one corner of a low wall dividing the roofs of two houses during the foregoing conversation, while Scrawny Will had remained in his original position seated in the gutter.

The pugilist now stepped over to the side of Will and looked down at him with a peculiar gleam in his eye, as if a new thought had just struck him.

"See here, Cap," he said, "I don't like to have no man pickin' on me all the time, and I want you to quit it."

"Quit what?" said Scrawny Will, looking contemptuously at his companion.

"Why, quit this always tellin' me to keep my mouth shut, and blamin' me for things I don't do, and treatin' me as if I was a big mummy, as don't know anything only to do as I am told; that's what!"

Jim Cripps was a powerfully built man, and as he stood clearly outlined against the bright moon, he looked to Scrawny Will like a very giant.

And the giant was mad too.

"What are you talking about?" asked Scrawny Will.

He did not like the attitude of his big friend, and he could not afford to quarrel with him—just yet.

"Scrawny Will, I have done a many little jobs for you that you wouldn't want everybody to know about."

"And you have been paid for them, too," put in Scrawny.

"Zackly. I've been paid for them, I know, and got about half what the jobs was worth."

"Won't five hundred dollars pay you for the Stretcher Bull racket?"

"P'raps it would if I could work it."

"Well, darn your ugly picture, you've got to work it," howled Scrawny, forgetting all about the disadvantage at which he stood in relation to the prize-fighter away up on the roof of a tall house with no one to whom he could appeal for protection in case of an attack by Cripps. He could only remember that he had risked almost every dollar he had in the world on the success of his "unknown," "Git Thar Owney," and that there was danger of his being beaten unless the redoubtable Stretcher Bull could be bought.

"As I told you before, it was you as interfered with the job when I was getting my man just where I wanted him," growled Cripps, sullenly.

"Now, look here, Jim Cripps, we may as well understand each other. I've made you a fair offer, and I expect you to live up to the contract. If you don't—"

"Well, if I don't, what then?"

"I'll find means to get even with you."

"Get even, will yer? As how?"

"I have a way of doing it."

"Blow the gaff on me 'bout su'thin', I s'pose that's what yer mean, ain't it?"

Jim Cripps was moving nearer to Scrawny Will, as he spoke, and the red, bleary eyes, set deeply in the round head, gleamed dangerously.

"Don't come too near just now, Jim Cripps," said Scrawny Will. "I can hear you just as well where you are."

Still the pugilist moved nearer, with a soft, stealthy step, like that of a cat who has a mouse almost in her claws.

"Keep back, I tell you!" said Scrawny, as his right hand crept behind him toward his hip pocket.

"Do you mean to say tha' you'll give me away if I ain't able to fix Stretcher Bull?" hissed Jim Cripps.

"Perhaps."

With a bound the pugilist was upon the other, grasping him by the throat with a hold that meant death.

No chance for Scrawny to draw the pistol upon the butt of which his fingers had rested when Cripps sprung at him.

The little man had enough to do to catch his breath, with those merciless fingers on his throat.

"Scrawny Will, you have kept me under for nearly a year, and now it's my turn."

Scrawny Will could only roll his eyes in agony.

"You've been a-pretendin' as you knows things about me, and hintin' as you'd give me over to the cops at any time unless I did as you told me, and makin' a slave of me in every way."

Scrawny Will gurgled. His face was turning black.

"Now I'm going to stop it for good."

Cripps forced Scrawny Will down on his back in the gutter, and would undoubtedly have ended the latter's career then and there if unexpected relief had not arrived.

Just as Cripps was preparing to get a better grip on Scrawny Will's throat, something seized the pugilist by the coat between the shoulder-blades and dragged him from his prostrate would-be victim.

"A thousand devils! What is that?" howled Cripps.

There was no answer, nothing but a burning sensation in his back, as if two white-hot pieces of steel were searing his flesh.

He tried to turn his head sufficiently to see what new foe he had to contend with.

But he could not see anything, though the burning steel was still in his flesh, and was dragging him, back from the gutter where Scrawny lay, slowly recovering his senses.

"Let go!" gasped Cripps.

No answer.

"What is it? It is tearing me to pieces," he howled.

With a superhuman effort he tore himself loose and swung around until he could see what the pieces of white-hot steel were.

They were the yellow fangs of an immense bull dog.

If there was anything of which Jim Cripps stood in mortal terror it was a strange dog especially a bull-dog.

The animal stood facing him, with his four feet firmly planted as if ready for a spring, and his terrible yellow teeth bared threateningly.

Cripps moved back a little.

The brute growled.

"Poor dog! Good dog!" said Cripps insinuatingly, adding to himself: "I'm afraid to shoot, 'cause it would bring everybody up here to see what was the matter, or I'd put a bullet in your ugly carcass in a second."

Cripps again tried to edge away.

The dog followed him.

Scrawny Will, who had somewhat recovered himself, was sitting up in the gutter looking around in a dazed kind of way.

He realized that Jim Cripps and a bull-dog were in the neighborhood but he was too bewildered by his recent choking to feel any terror of either.

"What the dickens shall I do?" muttered Cripps.



His back was toward Scrawny and he did not see that the little man was sitting up.

It would not have interested him if he had.

He had his attention exclusively engaged by the bull-dog at that moment.

"I've got to do something. I can't stay up here till breakfast time lookin' at a bull-dog. It's must daylight now and I want to get out o' this fore people is around."

Thus soliloquized Jim Cripps, keeping a wary eye on his canine enemy the while, while Scrawny Will, himself again by this time, had just grasped the situation and was enjoying it in his dry way.

"Jim, what are you doing with that dog?"

The pugilist started and half turned toward Scrawny, who had risen to his feet.

The dog growled and made a movement.

Cripps stopped and faced the dog.

"Jim, I asked you what you were doing with that dog?" repeated Scrawny.

"Can't yer see what I'm doin'? I'm a-mindin' him until his owner comes," said Cripps.

"Well, you'd better tie him up and leave him. He can't very well get away from here, and it's no use you wasting your precious time."

Scrawny spoke slowly and sneeringly, and if Jim Cripps had dared look away from the dog a minute he would have showed Scrawny a face so disturbed by rage and terror that it was scarcely human.

"Afraid of a dog, eh, Jim Cripps?" said Scrawny.

"Maybe you'd be afraid of him yerself if you'd felt his teeth in your back."

"Guess you must have teased him or he would not have bitten you."

"Guess you don't know anything about it."

"Perhaps not."

"Scrawny."

"Well."

"I'm kinder sorry."

"Sorry? What for?"

"For what I did just now."

"What?"

"Why, chokin' yer."

"What made you do it then?"

The bull-dog growled.

Cripps had moved slightly, in the interest of his colloquy with Scrawny, and the animal resented the liberty.

"Darn that dog!" hissed Jim Cripps, through his closed teeth.

"You had better keep still, Jim. The dog doesn't want to be slighted," sneered Scrawny.

"Scrawny," said Cripps.

"Go on. I'm listening."

"I'm sorry I choked you that time."

"You'll be more sorry before we get through."

"Well, why did you make me so mad?"

"Just for fun."

It was evident that Scrawny would not advance half way to meet Cripps's attempts at conciliation.

"Scrawny."

"Yes."

"What am I to do?"

"I don't know. Didn't you say you were minding that dog for some one. I'm going."

"Well, but you ain't goin' to leave me here, are you? You wouldn't go back on a chum like that, would you, Scrawny?"

"You are a great chum, you are. I ought to value your acquaintance a great deal, oughtn't I?"

"Look here, Scrawny, let's fix this thing somehow. Can't you get behind that dog and club the brains out with a brick or something?"

"You must be sick to think that I would go fooling with a strange bulldog," said Scrawny, as he moved away, as if to leave Cripps to his fate.

"Scrawny, are you goin'? I daren't look 'round, but I can hear you movin'."

"Yes. I'm goin'. I guess everything is quiet on the street by this time, and I have got a good deal of business to attend to."

"What kind of business?"

"Well among other things to call on a certain captain of police and tell him where he will find a man he wants on the roof of a house, having fun with a bulldog."

Jim Cripps started, and the dog growled menacingly.

"Scrawny."

"What is it?"

"If you'll help me out of this I'll never go back on you again."

"I ain't afraid of you."

"Well I mean I'll never try it."

Scrawny Will stepped up to Cripps and stood close behind him while he spoke in his ear:

"See here, Jim Cripps, I've been a good friend to you, and I'm willing to continue so if you behave yourself. I've given you a job that will pay you well, and I want you to attend to it. But you must understand that when you are working for me you must obey orders."

"I always do, don't I?"

"Well, is it a go?"

"Is what a go?" asked Cripps, still with his eye fixed on the dog, who stood like a statue facing him.

"If I get you away from this dog you will not try any more mutiny. It won't do you any good if you do, because I always have friends within call who will put you in hoc so quickly that you'll never know what caught you."

"I'll do anything, Cap, only get me out of this."

Without another word, Scrawny fixed his gaze on the dog, walked slowly up to him, and put his finger between the two rows of sharp yellow teeth.

The dog licked his hand.

"Well, Cap, if you ain't a daisy," was Cripps's admiring comment.

"Now, git, Jim, as soon as you can. I'll meet you

at the Broadway place at six this evening. In the mean time go and get some sleep."

"All right, Cap. I'm goin'," said Cripps, as he disappeared behind a stack of chimneys.

"Sting, you're a good dog. You have saved my life before. I knew you as soon as I saw you. But I should like to know how you got all this way from Pittsburg," said Scrawny Will as he fondled the terrible creature which had appeared on the scene so opportunely for the little man.

The dog whined with pleasure and rubbed himself against Scrawny Will's knees. He had not had time to show his recognition of an old friend while he had Jim Cripps on his hands as it were, but he was making up for it now.

"That big fool would have choked me, Sting, if it hadn't been for you, do you know it?" continued Scrawny, patting the great head, while the dog looked up at him with an intelligence that was almost human.

Suddenly the dog raised its head, while the nervous movement of its ears gave premonition of danger.

Then like a flash a rope was thrown over the animal's head, and a slip-knot drawn tightly around his throat until his eyes started from their sockets, while almost at the same instant two powerful hands seized Scrawny and hurried him headlong from the roof, fifty feet above the cobblestones of the street.

"Fixed you this time, Scrawny Will!" cried Jim Cripps, as, with a demoniacal smile, he once more retreated behind the stack of chimneys and sought the trap-door in the roof of the corner house.

## CHAPTER VII.

OWNEY BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND THE REASON HE IS IMPRISONED.

WHEN Owney was so unexpectedly entrapped, he felt quite certain his assailants were the two young men who had stolen the diamonds.

What their object was in blindfolding and binding him he could only conjecture.

It could hardly have been to save themselves from arrest on account of the theft, because they could easily have avoided him.

No; there must be some other reason.

What that reason was, Owney felt sure he should find out in good time. Just now, his first thought was to get out of his unpleasant predicament.

He had been thrown flat on the floor, and after the bustle of the first onslaught had subsided, a death-like stillness had prevailed.

Owney strained his ears in the effort to catch some scraps of conversation that might help him to determine what his enemies intended to do with him.

Not a sound, save the slow ticking of an old-fashioned clock which he had noticed standing in a corner of the bar-room.

This he could hear in a muffled way, coming through the thick sack that covered his head.

The door of the closet was open, then; that was evident.

But where were the young men and the red-headed bartender?

That they were all working together he knew, because their triumphant laughter had intermingled when he first found himself in their power.

The two young men were professional pickpockets and swell mobsmen, who followed circuses and were always ready for business at race-meetings and other well-attended sporting events. Owney had seen them dozens of times before, and if he could only get out of his present fix, had no fear about catching them and holding them for the robbery of the diamonds.

But he must also recover the jewels, and that quickly.

Though he knew Scrawny Will was only speculating on his ability as an oarsman, and would not care if he were killed five minutes after winning the forthcoming race, Owney felt that his own honor was concerned in the matter, and determined to be on the Hulton course at Pittsburg in his boat, on the 6th of July, come what might.

"I'll git thar, as sure as my name is Owney!" he muttered, as he tried to catch his breath in the suffocating folds of the sack.

The ropes around his limbs were cutting deep into his flesh and he began to feel stiff and sore.

He tried to roll over toward the right, but found that he was hedged in on that side by the legs of the table, which were fastened to the floor. On the other side he was jammed tightly against the wall.

He was almost as firmly fixed as if in a vise.

What was that?

Surely he felt the boards trembling beneath him.

What could be the cause?

Was it an earthquake, or was the strain on his limbs and the almost unbearable suffocation of the sack turning his brain?

He threw all his energy into the effort to move.

But in vain!

He was helpless!

There it was again! That horrible trembling!

Heavens! The floor was slowly sinking, and he was going with it!

Down, down it went, and a blast of cold air told Owney that he was below the level of the floor of the saloon.

How much of the floor formed the platform on which he was descending he could not tell, but he knew it could not be more than two feet wide, because that was the extent of the space between the legs of the table and the wall, and the table was not going down with him.

There was a damp, moldy smell, and the cold became more and more marked as he got lower.

"This is a nice way to drop people into a cellar, I must say," thought Owney. "What can they be going to do with me? I'll make it lively for those fellows yet. They will hardly dare to murder me, I guess, even if they had anything to gain by it. No. They want to keep me safe until they can get rid of those stones and find their way into their holes somewhere. That is their game."

Still the platform kept on sinking.

"Gawd! Gawd! How much lower, I wonder!" thought Owney. "It is time I reached the floor of the cellar."

Lower and lower yet!

Owney was not easily scared, but this was an entirely new experience.

The stifling folds of the sack were rapidly exhausting him, and the ropes were cutting deeper into his flesh.

Still his narrow platform continued to move downward, shaking more and more as it proceeded.

Ah! it stopped!

What would be the next thing?

Suddenly Owney realized that he was not alone.

Fingers were moving stealthily over him from head to foot.

Owney felt that his revolver and handcuffs were being removed from his pockets.

His credentials as an officer, and his money were safely hidden in a small bag fastened like a garter around his leg, and which he only used occasionally, when he knew that he was going into a dangerous locality.

It chafed the young detective to feel that he lay there like a trussed chicken, while his enemies went through his pockets at their own sweet will.

But he could not help himself.

The ropes were so tight that even if they had been removed at that instant he could not have done anything. His blood was stagnated in his veins and his whole body was numb. Besides, there was that terrible sack over his head, which would long since have reduced to insensibility anybody with less vitality than the wiry young athlete.

During the time that the hands moved over him, feeling in every pocket and searching his clothes for hidden receptacles, not a word had been spoken.

Owney fancied there were at least two people with him, but he could not be sure, the hands moved so lightly and quickly over him.

"They are old pickpockets, that is certain," he thought. "They do their work very neatly."

Suddenly the sack was pulled off his head, while a blinding stream of light fell full on his eyes.

It was the flash of a bull's-eye lantern.

He could not see anything else, as the ropes that bound him were swiftly removed.

Then the platform quaked once more and he sunk rapidly, looking straight at the light, as if fascinated.

Further and further went the light as he descended until at last he stopped with such a violent jerk as to throw him off the platform, while the light suddenly disappeared and he heard a sound as of a closing door or trap above him.

The platform had reached the bottom of the shaft or cellar, or whatever it was, and when Owney was thrown off he found himself lying on the damp earth.

Where could he be?

All he could do for a few minutes was to be still and let his benumbed limbs regain a little of their normal feeling.

But he could think the while.

The result of his cogitations was seen when, having recovered somewhat, he stood up and felt to make sure that his credentials were safe.

Yes; they had not been disturbed.

But there was something else besides money and papers in the secret canvas bag which was of more importance to him just now than anything else.

A small silver match-box and a few inches of wax taper.

He lighted the taper and examined his prison.

A small chamber inclosed on three sides by solid walls apparently of rock. The fourth side of brick had an archway about four feet in circumference, leading he could not tell where.

It was evidently one of those secret hiding places familiar to so many criminals in New York, where safety can be found for a time when the law presses too hard.

Owney tried to peer into the archway with the aid of his lighted taper.

All he could see was a thick blackness.

The archway was not a straight road, as he had hoped at first, but was built on the edge of an abyss—how deep he could not tell.

He put in his head and listened.

Yes; as he suspected, there was water below.

He could hear it dashing along and the rank smell told him it was part of the sewerage system of the city.

No hope of escape that way.

Again he walked around the small cell and stumbled over a mattress in one corner.

"Good idea," thought Owney. "I am too tired to think properly now. I'll lie down and take a snooze, for an hour or two. Perhaps by that time they will let me out. If they do, it is of no use my bothering myself with trying to escape; and if they don't, I shall be better able then to do something for myself. I'll git thar somehow. I ain't the boy to get badly left on anything."

Owney was a philosopher. He had been in plenty of tight places before, and he had always managed to get out. He did not feel any particular fear in his present situation. He looked upon it as only a question of time when he should recover the diamonds and see the thieves safely behind the bars. Then he would devote all his time and attention to



the boat-race at Pittsburg, which he felt bound in honor to win if he could.

He lay down on the mattress, and stretching his still stiffened limbs, dropped off to sleep like an innocent child.

How long he slept he did not know, but he was awakened by hearing voices.

"He is down there, colonel. Guess he must be sleeping," said a hoarse voice that he recognized as that of the red-headed bartender.

"Are you sure he is only sleeping? You haven't made a blunder, and—put him to sleep altogether?"

Owney started as a light broke over him.

The last speaker was Frank Burton, the backer of Stretcher Bull, the oarsman.

"No, no, colonel," returned the bartender. "He's all right; he's too tough to be put to sleep very easily. He's just snoozin' down there, and it's a mighty good thing that he has that much sense."

"Well, all right. Keep him there for a day or two until I make some other arrangements; but, mind he has no idea that I have anything to do with it. Let him think it is the doings of those fellows who got the diamonds, then there will be no harm done to any one. They are far enough away by this time to be safe, and he can't prove anything against you."

"All right, colonel."

"You say he was unconscious when you dropped him down there?"

"Dumb as a clam."

"How do you know?"

"'Cause I slugged him a couple of times, and then put the sack over his head, and he was all soft like, when we let the elevator drop with him."

"Good."

"I suppose I'd better give him something to eat."

"Yes. I've brought something with me; I didn't know whether you might have any grub handy."

"All right, colonel."

"Here it is—a loaf and a bologna sausage."

"Shall I throw them down?"

"No. Can't you let them down with a string? May as well be decent about it as far as you can," returned Frank Burton.

"All right, colonel."

Owney lay still. He could just distinguish in the space above him that the blackness was not quite so dense as elsewhere, and he thought he could make out the outlines of two heads in a shadowy sort of way.

Frank Burton and the red-headed bartender were in the cellar immediately over him, but had not brought any light.

The shadowy figures disappeared for a few moments and returned.

Then he could hear the bartender puffing and straining as he lowered something into the subterranean apartment.

"Hallo, colonel! This cord is not long enough by several feet. I've got the loaf on a fish-hook. Shall I shake it off?"

"No. Tie on another piece of string."

"Ain't got no more string."

"Well, take this rope, then."

"All right, colonel."

Another pause while the bartender fastened the rope to the cord, and then Owney felt a loaf on his face.

He did not touch it, because he thought it best not to let the others know that he was aware of their presence.

"Darn that fellow. He sleeps like a log," said the bartender, as he shook the cord to disengage the loaf.

It fell by the side of Owney's head. Then the hook was drawn up and the sausage lowered in the same way.

The next thing was a tin-pail of water.

"Jerusalem! I've dropped the rope and cord and the whole business!" ejaculated the bartender.

"What made you do that, you fool!" said Frank Burton, savagely.

"I couldn't help it, colonel. I don't see what you want to call a man a fool for, just because of an accident," returned the bartender.

"Oh, well, let it go, and shut down the trap."

"All right, colonel."

Bang went the trap and Owney sat up on his mattress.

He felt for the loaf and pulled it in two. He was hungry, and the food was welcome.

He put his fingers into the interior of one-half of the loaf to pull out a mouthful, when he found in his hand a piece of paper.

Owney did not eat any bread just then.

Instead, he lighted his taper and examined the scrap of paper.

As he expected, there was writing on it.

It was a miserable scrawl, but the words were straight to the point. It read:

"Open the sausage, but don't eat it. The bread is all right."

Owney looked at the paper from every point of view, and studied it long and earnestly in the endeavor to determine from whom it came, but in vain.

That it was from some one who wished to save him from a threatened disaster he could not doubt, but who?

He did not waste much time in trying to answer an unsolvable conundrum, but set his wits to work to decide on what he had better do.

The sausage!

He was to open it.

Carefully he took it up and broke it in half.

Ah! Something hard ran through its entire length.

A file!

That's a useful implement at all times," muttered Owney, "and may help me to git thar on this occasion."

He took a draught of water and slowly munched the bread as he reflected on his situation.

It was all plain to him now why he had been put down below the surface of the earth and made such a close prisoner.

Frank Burton was Stretcher Bull's backer, and he meant his man to win the race. The best way to insure this was to get his opponent out of condition when there would be no time for him to train for the contest.

"I'll euchre you yet, though, Frank Burton, as sure as my name is 'Git Thar Owney,'" he muttered, and I'll surprise both you and Stretcher Bull on the Hulton course on the 6th of July.

"Owney, come to the arch," said a voice, which sounded strangely hollow and supernatural, at this moment.

Involuntarily Git Thar Owney ran toward the archway, and listened, but nothing could be heard save the turbid waters of the sewer rushing on their darksome way to the river.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### SCRAWNY WILL'S AND MAY CRIPPS'S EXPEDITION AND WHAT CAME OF IT

We must now return to the young girl, May, whom we left in the boarding-house just as her father, Crook Cripps, managed to elude the grasp of Tom Blodgett, the policeman.

When she saw that her father was safe she went back into her room and thought over her situation.

What was to become of her?

She was alone, in a strange city, with very little money, and her father, her only relative in the world, save her uncle Jim, was she knew not where.

She could not expect to stay here very long, without paying for her board, even had she desired it, and if she could get back to Pittsburg she would not know where to go. Her father had only hired furnished rooms for them since they had lived there—now two years—and he had given them up when they started on this trip to New York.

"Oh, mother, mother, if you were alive now, how your poor little May would rush to your arms," wailed the girl in her agony of spirit.

She walked to the window and looked out into the darkness, just broken by the first streaks of dawn.

She stood there for a long time, thinking of her forlorn condition, when a thumping and scratching at the door recalled her to herself.

Then she heard the subdued whining of a dog.

"Why, it must be Sting," she exclaimed, joyfully, as she opened the door.

It was Sting, and mighty glad Sting was to see her.

The fierce bull dog was as gentle as a kitten with her and she kissed his ugly head as affectionately as if he had been a baby.

"Why, I declare, I had forgotten you, Sting. How did you find me here? I missed you when father and I went into that restaurant," she said, as she fondled him.

Sting did not answer save by a low wail, but if he did not unders and her his looks belied his intelligence.

She felt stronger now that the dog was with her. He had been her best friend and protector since the death of her mother, and she never feared anything while he was near.

The room she was in had a sloping ceiling on one side, showing that it was built on the roof, and in the sloping portion a little window opening on hinges looked onto the roof.

The window had been opened to let in the air, and May moved over to it to cool her flushed cheeks.

What was the matter with the dog?

He was standing with his four feet planted firmly on the floor, and growling in a low but fierce tone that indicated something unusual.

May could not hear or see anything, but she knew the instinct of her brute friend was seldom at fault, and she waited patiently for developments.

They soon came.

With one bound Sting flew through the little aperture in the sloping roof, and was, as we know, just in time to save Scrawny Will from Jim Cripps's murderous fingers.

May heard the scuffling and voices, mingled with an occasional growl from Sting.

Then there was a silence, followed by a crash, and a man's form came down from the roof in front of the window looking toward the street.

May involuntarily closed her eyes, as she thought of the terrible mass of mangled flesh that would be picked up from the stones below.

When she ventured to open them again she saw something that almost froze the blood in her veins.

The man was still hanging head downward by one foot in front of her window.

He was holding to the sash as well as he could, and was looking at her with a white, drawn agony on his face to which its inverted position lent something horribly ludicrous, with an intensity that pleaded for help more piteously than could any spoken appeal.

She must save him!

But how?

The first thing was to open the window.

She could not raise or lower either sash. That would very likely throw him down at once.

She must take them right out.

With a dexterity no one but a hardy have expected

of a young, inexperienced girl, May took out both sashes carefully, so as not to shake the man hanging so precariously between life and death.

"Now you had better let me draw your head and shoulders as far into the room as I can, and then loosen your foot," she said.

"Yes, that's all right," returned Scrawny Will, "but perhaps my foot will not come loose."

"It must," was the quiet, but resolute reply.

"Good; you have grit in you, and I always did like you for it," said Scrawny.

May had been very much surprised when she recognized in the man hanging outside her window a friend of her father's whom she had often seen in Pittsburg, but this was no time to talk about it.

"Can you let me pull you in a little further?" she asked, as she tugged at Scrawny Will's shoulders.

"If you don't I shall drop into the street, sure," he answered.

She gave one more determined pull, and Scrawny's foot was released from the crevice in the parapet which had saved him from instant death, and he lay sprawling and gasping on the floor of the room.

"May, you have saved my life this time," said Scrawny Will, "and some time perhaps I shall be able to do some little thing like that for you. How did you get here?"

May told him in a few words how her father had left her in Union Square, and how a young man, who said he was a dry-goods clerk, had come to her assistance, and how he had arranged with the lady of the house to let her stay here until her father could be found.

"Where is this dry-goods clerk?" asked Scrawny.

"Oh! my necklace. Some thieves stole it, and I think the young man has gone to see if he can hear anything about it," said May, simply.

"Um! You shouldn't trust strangers quite so much, May. This young man may be a thief himself."

"Oh, no. I'm sure he is not, and you ought to have seen how he saved Mrs. Wilkins from the horses on Broadway. And I believe he is in disguise for some reason, because I saw that he had light, curly hair under the wig he wore, and he had very bright, blue eyes, and his hands looked too hard for a dry-goods clerk's, and there was a small anchor and two letters on the back of one of his hands."

"What were the two letters?" asked Scrawny, eagerly.

"I could not see them very plainly, but I think one was an 'O,'"

"Of course it was, and the other was a 'P'; I know it was," said Scrawny.

"I believe you are right."

"I know I'm right. May, I've got to find that young man, and you must help me."

"How?"

"Well, in the first place, go to bed and sleep for a few hours. I will come for you about four or five o'clock this afternoon. Don't be afraid. You will be all right now. We will find your father easily enough, and until we do, why, Scrawny Will will never go back on Crook Cripps's little girl—even though he has it in deep for his brother Jim," he added to himself.

May was putting in the sash of the window, but Scrawny rushed over and took the job out of her hands. She had given him some valuable information, and he felt that he could not show her too much attention.

"Where can Sting be?" said May.

"Lord, yes. I forgot the dog," said Scrawny. "It is a shame, too, for Sting turned up at a very lucky moment for me."

He went to the small window in the sloping ceiling and crawled out on the roof. In a moment Sting came bounding into the room, wagging his stumpy tail and looking as happy as if nothing had occurred to disturb him.

"Found him with a rope pretty tight around his neck, but Sting don't mind a little thing like that," said Scrawny, as he crawled back into the room.

It was now nearly broad daylight, and Scrawny Will, telling May to try and sleep soundly until he came for her, left her and Sting together until he should come back in the afternoon.

Promptly at five o'clock Scrawny Will returned.

He, also, had been taking some much-needed rest, and felt ready for whatever the night might bring forth.

All he wanted was to get hold of "Git Thar" Owney, take him back to Pittsburg, and see that he was placed properly in training. Then he could return to New York and try and fix Stretcher Bull himself, as his connection with Jim Cripps must necessarily be at an end since the latter's desperate attempt to murder him.

Ten minutes later Scrawny Will and May were on the street, walking in the direction of Broadway.

"You think you would know the place where you were robbed May?" asked Scrawny.

"Oh yes, I'm sure I should," returned the girl.

A little more questioning convinced Scrawny Will that he knew the spot, and when he stopped in front of the saloon on Broadway where the red-headed bartender was such a prominent feature, she said, without hesitation, that they had come to the right place.

"I thought so," said Scrawny Will. "Should you know the young men who robbed you?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

"Do you think I shall get my necklace back?"

"Yes, if you do as I tell you."

"I will."

"That is right."

"What do you want me to do first?"

"Follow me."

"Into a saloon?"



"Yes."  
 "But I don't like to go into a place like that."  
 "Isn't Sting with you?"  
 "Yes."  
 "And do you think I would lead you into any danger?"  
 "No," hesitatingly.  
 "Come on, then."  
 Scrawny Will meant business, and he did not want to have his arrangements upset by a girl's scruples about entering a saloon.  
 He walked down the dark hall where the reader has already been several times, the girl timidly following with Sting close at her heels.  
 She derived much more courage from the presence of the dog than from that of Scrawny Will.  
 Scrawny Will paused when he reached the inner door and peered through the red glass on which was painted the words, "Sample Room."  
 "Both in there, by Jiminy!" he exclaimed.  
 He pushed the door open, after telling the girl to wait in the hall, and entered.  
 "Hallo, Scrawny!" said the two young men who had robbed May, who were leaning against the bar in conversation with the red-headed bartender.  
 "Hallo, yourself," was Scrawny's gruff response.  
 "Where have you been, Scrawny?" asked the bartender.  
 "None of yer business."  
 "Well, what'll you drink?" asked one of the young men.  
 "Nothing, just now."  
 "Kinder out of sorts, ain't you, Scrawny?"  
 "Kinder."  
 "What's up?"  
 "Come here, both of you. I want to speak to you privately," said Scrawny. "Come outside in the hall."  
 "Say, Scrawny, this ain't no give-away is it?" asked the other.  
 "No, it ain't as yet, but I don't know what it might be if you don't do as I tell you," returned Scrawny. "Come out in the hall, I tell you."  
 Whatever may have been the nature of the mysterious power which Scrawny Will seemed to hold over so many of his associates, it was evident that the two young men were thoroughly under its influence.  
 They followed him out in the hall without another word.  
 Sting gave a little growl.  
 Both the young men started.  
 Then May stepped forward into the light and they started again.  
 "Scrawny," said one. "You are sure this ain't a give away?"  
 "Didn't I tell you it wasn't?"  
 "Yes."  
 "And do I ever lie to you?"  
 "No, Scrawny, of course you don't. You know, I never said you did; now did I, Scrawny?"  
 The young man was evidently anxious to mollify Scrawny.  
 "Now, where is that necklace?" said Scrawny, suddenly.  
 "What necklace?"  
 "No fooling. Where is that necklace?"  
 The two young men looked in each other's faces, and then one of them, stooping slowly and reluctantly drew the diamond necklace from his boot.  
 May uttered a cry of joy when she saw her necklace again, and put out her hand to Scrawny for it.  
 "Never mind, May. I'll take care of them for the present," said Scrawny, coolly, as he placed the diamonds in an inner pocket. "They will be safer with me than with you until we find your father."  
 Then he turned to the young men again.  
 "You know something about a friend of mine," he said, suddenly.  
 "What friend are you talking about?"  
 "A man who was with this girl when you hooked her necklace."  
 "I don't know what you are talking about," said one of the young men, with a look of injured innocence.  
 "You don't?"  
 "No."  
 "He was last seen in your company."  
 "He wasn't. He went out on Broadway and spoke to a dozen people after he left us."  
 Scrawny Will chuckled to himself. Owney had been with them then. He had only surmised it before, but now he knew it.  
 "I want that young man, and I'm going to find out from you where he went."  
 "How do we know where he went? He left us and walked away. New York is a big city, and he might be anywhere for what we know."  
 "Perhaps right under our feet," said Scrawny.  
 The two young men turned pale.  
 Was Scrawny Will a very devil, that he could find out anything?  
 Not at all. Scrawny was talking at haphazard, and, as is often the case, had accidentally and unknowingly come near the truth.  
 "Are you going to tell me?" asked Scrawny.  
 "Remember, I have this young lady here ready to make a charge against you."  
 The young men knew that Scrawny Will did not often indulge in idle threats, and they also knew that he could have them both in the hands of the police in thirty seconds if he chose.  
 "Look here, Scrawny," said one, after they had whispered together for a minute. "I'll tell you all about it, but don't give me away, or by Caesar, I'll be a dead man."  
 "That's just what you will be if you say another word," interrupted Frank Burton, as he suddenly appeared in the doorway and covered each of the young men with a heavy "bulldog" revolver.

CHAPTER IX.  
 OWNEY TAKES A TERRIBLE TRIP IN COMPANY WITH AN OLD GRAY RAT.

"COULD I have been dreaming?" said Owney to himself. "I can swear I heard some one telling me to come to the arch. But there is nothing but darkness, and I don't see how anybody could be speaking to me here."  
 He was perplexed.  
 Could there be any way out through this arch, and was the owner of the voice a friend who desired to help him out of his predicament?  
 It certainly looked like it.  
 And yet, on the other hand, from all he could make out by the dim light of the taper, there was not a vestige of foothold for any one under this mysterious archway.  
 The file was in his hand.  
 A sudden thought struck him.  
 He would not wait for any further help than he had already received.  
 He would try and get out himself.  
 The arch must have been put there for some purpose, and he would endeavor to determine its use.  
 If nothing more came of it, it would occupy him while he was waiting for release.  
 He had noticed, on the ground by his side, when he had lighted his taper to read the note sent in the loaf, a huge stone.  
 He brought it over to the arch, and with it hammered the sharp end of the file—a very stout one—into the mortar between two of the bricks of the wall.  
 "That will do!" he exclaimed, as he tested its strength and found that it would easily bear his weight. "Now for the rope."  
 He examined the rope which the bartender had accidentally dropped, and saw that it was some twelve or fifteen feet long—much more than he would require.  
 With a practiced hand, he fastened one end of the rope securely to the file and let the other dangle into the pit just through the arch.  
 He heard the rope strike the water below and saw that the strong current was causing it to drag out from the wall to which it was fastened.  
 That did not trouble him, however. His weight would make the rope hang straight.  
 He was going down into the pit to see, or rather feel, what sort of a place it was, and whether there was any chance of escape that way.  
 Seizing the rope firmly with both hands, Owney let himself down, hand over hand, until his feet touched the water.  
 Then he threw himself around in every direction trying to find a resting-place for his feet.  
 Nothing but water!  
 Where did the voice come from that called him to the arch?  
 As he hung on the rope, swaying to and fro he glanced upward.  
 All was blackness, and—No! Stay! He could distinguish a gleam of light high up in the vault of gloom!  
 A small star it appeared at first. Then as his strained eyes grew more accustomed to the shadows he saw that the light came from a square opening leading apparently into the outer world.  
 "Owney, where are you?"  
 The voice came echoing down to him, muffled and throaty, like that of a ventriloquist.  
 Then he saw a round object partly obscure the square opening.  
 The round object was a man's head, and the mystery of the voice was explained.  
 "Owney, where are you?" repeated the voice.  
 "Come to the archway!"  
 "Hello, above, there!" yelled Owney, in return.  
 "Who is that?"  
 "Never mind. You'll know some time, and I don't want to sing out my name now. I don't know who might hear me," returned the voice, in the same strained, muffled tones.  
 "Did you send me a message?" asked Owney, as he still kept his feet moving in the hope of finding some support.  
 "Yes; that's all right. I like to give a man a square deal, and I don't allow no man to be worked foul in a race with me."  
 "What, are you—?"  
 "Hush! S-s-h!" cried Stretcher Bull for he it was as he bent further down over the sewer drop.  
 "Don't mention my name. It is all a put-up job to knock you out for the race, and I'm going to help you out."  
 "Thanks! Do as much for you some day, perhaps," said Owney, briefly, for he was beginning to get a little tired, strong and vigorous as his muscles were. Holding to a rope, without any other assistance is fatiguing work.  
 "That's all right. Now listen."  
 "I'm listening," returned Owney.  
 "Let yourself down to the water."  
 "I'm there already."  
 "Good. It is only about three feet deep."  
 "The deuce!" ejaculated Owney, as he immediately dropped into the water and stood on the bottom of the sewer.  
 "What's that splashing?" asked Stretcher Bull.  
 "Nothing of any consequence," said Owney.  
 "All right. Well, the only way for you to get out of that, unless you want to stay there a couple of weeks, is through the sewer."  
 "Through the sewer?"  
 "That's what I said."  
 "Why can't I get up to where you are?"  
 "Cause you can't. This is a sewer drop in a narrow alley. There wouldn't be hardly room for you to get through even if you could climb up here, which you couldn't."

"Well, I guess you know," said Owney, resignedly.  
 "Guess I do."  
 "Go on with your scheme."  
 "It's just this. That sewer runs into the East River."  
 "Well?"  
 "But it's a long way from where you are."  
 "I know it."  
 "You'll have to walk along until you get near the outlet."  
 "Go on."  
 "When you get within a few feet, unless the tide is very low, you will have to dive."  
 "Well?"  
 "But you might have room to swim right out if the water isn't up to the top of the sewer arch."  
 "Got to take chances, of course," said Owney.  
 "Course!"  
 "Much obliged to you, old man."  
 "No you ain't. When anybody tries to do any funny business over a race as I'm in, I'm goin' to give them the 'double cross,' every time, you can bet. Besides, I saw you lay out that English wrestler professor, an' I've kinder took a shine to you, d'ye see?"  
 "Glad of it," said Owney.  
 "Say!"  
 "Hallo!"  
 "S'pose you can swim?"  
 "Oh, yes."  
 "That's right. Well the sooner you start the better, an' you'll strike it right at low tide."  
 "All right. I'll go right now. I ain't got much baggage to take with me, that's one comfort," said Owney. "My motto is 'Git thar,' and you bet I'll do it."  
 "Darned if you ain't a gritty young one," said Stretcher Bull, admiringly.  
 "Good by!" yelled Owney, as he prepared to walk along the dark water-tunnel by which he hoped to regain liberty and upset Frank Burton's scheme.  
 "Hold on a minute," said Stretcher Bull.  
 "What's the matter?"  
 "There's rats down there."  
 "Is that so. I ain't seen any yet," returned Owney.  
 "Praps not, but you might feel 'em before you git through."  
 "Can't help it. I'm bound to 'git thar,' rats or no rats."  
 "Yes, but see here."  
 "Well?"  
 "I'll throw you down a knife wrapped in a handkercher, so it won't hurt if it hits yer. Are you ready?"  
 "Let her come," responded Owney.  
 Splash came something in the water, and Owney found himself in possession of a dirk-knife in a case wrapped in Stretcher Bull's handkerchief.  
 He tied the handkerchief tightly around his waist and stuck the knife, sheath and all, in it.  
 "Good-by," he yelled once more to Stretcher Bull.  
 "Good-by, young one," returned Stretcher Bull.  
 "Good-luck to you, and I hope to row a square race with you on the 6th of July."  
 The next minute Owney had passed under the arch, and his perilous journey to death or liberty had commenced.  
 Carefully he felt his way along.  
 His taper had been extinguished, but he had taken the precaution to put that and his water-tight match-box in an upper vest-pocket.  
 For some distance he walked along in a straight line. He could barely distinguish the bricks arched above his head by a dim, phosphorescent light which doubtless arose from the foulness in the sewer.  
 The water, swiftly flowing in the direction he was going, toward the river, varied slightly in depth here and there, but never got more than six inches higher than the three feet.  
 Owney had the handle of his knife ready to his grasp, but so far had not met with any enemy upon whom his safety would require him to use it.  
 Fortunately the sewer was well flushed, and the water moving quickly, prevented the accumulation of gases and foul odors that might have suffocated the young Oarsman Detective, and brought his career to a premature close.  
 Strong-nerved as he was, however, he could not help thinking with horror that perhaps more than one victim of lawless revenge had been thrown from the arches of the cellar from which he had just escaped, to float down with the water of the sewer and be afterward found in the river—a case of unknown death. He knew that the archway being open at all was a violation of city ordinances, and that it could only have been left in that state for the furtherance of criminal designs.  
 "I'll visit that place again when I get out of this," he muttered. "And I just want to get one plug at that red-headed bartender."  
 He had by this time reached a turn in the sewer.  
 The slight phosphorescent illumination suddenly ceased, as he realized that at the turn the archway became much lower—so low that he had to stoop as he passed around the corner.  
 The attitude he was compelled to assume brought the water up to his chest, and he took the taper and matches out of his pocket as the slimy, cold torrent threatened to reach them.  
 For some twenty yards he proceeded in this way.  
 Then the low arch came to an end and he could once more stand up to his full height.  
 The phosphorescent light, too, returned, but the water was at least a foot higher than it had been at any time before, showing that he was slowly but steadily getting nearer to the river.  
 Suddenly he jumped with an exclamation of horror.



Something soft and active had dropped on his bare neck and then jumped with a splash into the water.

Owney drew his knife from its sheath and tried to look into the shadows above him.

Again! Another squirming, hairy something came on his neck, while what felt like the end of a wet rope struck him on the cheek!

"Rats!" shrieked Owney.

The thing like the end of a wet rope was a rat's tail, and the terrible creatures were falling on him from all directions.

Great, powerful creatures, as large as good-sized cats—fierce, cruel and eager for blood.

So far they seemed to be heedless of his presence.

They were jumping from above and alighted on his neck and shoulders apparently by accident.

Owney had been carrying the taper and matches in his left hand, while his right held the knife.

He put the former in his pocket and pressed rapidly on.

Soon he came to another smaller archway, though not as small as the former one.

The rats continued to fall on him occasionally, each time causing him to shrink and flourish his knife with the unutterable horror that the bravest of men feel of these pestilent vermin.

How much longer should he be before he reached the outlet?

And when he did get there, would it only be to meet with a horrible death below the foul waters?

Owney was no coward, and he looked on his chances with a calmness that is but seldom attained even by men who bear a fair reputation for personal courage.

Still he did not hide from himself that his situation was a desperate one.

To go back would be impossible, while in going forward he knew that at any moment a rise in the river from any one of a multitude of common causes would mean a back-water in the sewer, that would drown him in spite of all his efforts.

"It don't make any difference," said Owney to himself, as these thoughts rushed over his brain. "I said 'git thar,' and I'm going to do it!"

The rats kept on playing around him, and in the phosphorescent light he could distinguish one great gray brute, with yellow fangs showing beneath his whiskers, and sharp eyes that seemed to be trying to read his thoughts, leaping, swimming, splashing along by his side, as if with the intention of accompanying him to his journey's end.

More than once Owney swung his knife aloft as he thought the gray rat was about to attack him, but each time he found his apprehensions were needless. The gray rat's intentions were evidently peaceable—so far.

The water was getting deeper, and Owney began to think he must be reaching a point where the end of the sewer should be visible.

The arch was larger than any through which he had yet come, and as he arrived at another bend he saw in the distance a faint glimmer of light on the surface of the tumbling water, like a suggestion of the moon's rays.

The gray rat by his side saw it, too, for he sprang far out of the water and swam ahead of Owney, as if anxious to reach the spot.

Owney could hardly walk now. The water was up to his armpits.

A few more steps, and, with his knife thrust into the bosom of his vest, the young oarsman threw himself forward and struck out for the beacon light which he hoped would show him the way to liberty.

The light became plainer as he swam rapidly on with the current.

He could see that it streamed through a narrow space between the surface of the water and the top of the sewer arch.

Not more than an inch or two of space was there, and Owney felt a shudder run through him as the truth was forced upon him that there was not room enough to swim through.

He would be compelled to dive for it!

The old gray rat was still swimming by his side, sometimes so near that his body touched Owney's face.

He kept his eye on the glimmer of light, and tried to calculate when he should plunge under so as to rise outside the sewer.

Just as this thought struck him, the light disappeared.

In another instant it was there again.

Then it again vanished—this time for a longer period than at first.

Horrors! The river was rising and filling up the opening of the sewer.

He would be drowned like a dog in a sack unless he acted quickly.

It was pitch-dark now. The light had gone altogether.

For the moment even Owney's strong nerve threatened to desert him as he felt the gray rat rubbing against his face in that supernatural darkness, and he felt as if he must shriek aloud!

But he restrained himself.

"I'll git thar!" he hissed to himself. "They can't knock me out so easily."

The water was getting higher and higher as he neared the river, until he felt the top of the arch grazing his hair.

He must dive now.

He calculated that he was near enough to the arch to clear the edge when he came up if he struck it just right.

Should he miss it, however, and hit the arch inside it would be certain death!

He could not swim any further. The water was

getting higher every second, and the top of the arch was forcing his head down.

The gray rat was close to his face. It hung to him like fate.

"Now for it," he thought. "Now to prove that 'Git Thar' Owney is worthy of his name."

The foul, rushing water had reached Owney's lips.

The fateful moment had arrived.

Owney pushed the gray rat away with his right hand. He did not want to be bothered with anything just now.

He felt like a man about to cross swords with a foeman whose prowess had been tried in a hundred battles, while he was but a novice in combat.

There was no more time for hesitation.

He turned over on his back and floated for half a minute, to gain strength for the approaching ordeal.

Then he drew in a long breath, gathered all his nerve, and with a strong effort, plunged beneath the water.

Down, down he went, until his hands touched the bricks at the bottom of the sewer.

The gray rat was still with him!

Owney swam as swiftly as he could, with the water thundering in his ears and the gray rat rubbing against his face.

Would he be able to swim far enough to clear the sewer, or would he find himself inside when he tried to rise to the surface, and be held beneath the foul flood until he floated out at low tide a corpse?

The thought was horrible!

He was a strong swimmer, but he was fighting against fearful odds.

The water seemed to be pressing on his head, red-hot, like molten lead, and his eyes and ears felt as if they would burst!

He could not stand it much longer!

Would the gray rat rubbing against his face attack him as soon as it discovered, by its wonderful instinct, that he had given up the contest?

The thought nerved Owney to further endurance! "I will 'git thar' by heaven, I will!" he determined as he made a few more strokes.

Then he was obliged to concede that nature could stand no more, and he slowly rose.

The thick water precluded the possibility of his seeing anything.

He would know in a few seconds whether he was rising to death or liberty!

If his head struck the arch it would be all up with him!

Two more strokes and it would be decided!

One! Two!

His head hit the arch! He was inside the sewer, and the turbid waters would share their prey with the gray rat!

#### CHAPTER X.

##### A DOG-FIGHT AND A "SCRAP."

WHEN Frank Burton appeared on the scene in the hallway of the Broadway saloon and so effectually closed the mouths of the two pickpockets with his revolver, Scrawny Will was mad enough to have killed everybody present if he had had the power.

As it was, he knew he could not help himself, and, with a muttered threat that he would beat Frank Burton at his own game yet he told May to follow him and went out on Broadway.

He felt satisfied on one point. He had possession of the valuable diamond necklace, and unless Crook Cripps could prove very conclusively that it was his own property, honestly obtained, he meant to keep it.

Scrawny Will's principle was to take everything he could get, and to hold on to it to the last possible moment.

He walked slowly down Broadway with May, trying to think what he should do next.

Jim Cripps of course could not be used now to try and fix Stretcher Bull. The quarrel which had so nearly culminated in murder on the roof of the boarding-house could never be patched up, and he would not employ Jim again.

"I shall put him in jail as soon as I have a little spare time," was Scrawny's amiable reflection. "At present I have too many other matters to attend to, so he can enjoy his liberty for a few weeks longer. The bloodthirsty, ungrateful scoundrel!"

"Where are we going?" asked May, timidly.

"To find your father."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I think I know where he may be."

"In New York?"

"Yes."

"How far is it?"

"Not far."

"Can we walk there?"

"Yes."

May did not try to get any further information from Scrawny. He was evidently out of humor and was not inclined to answer questions.

"Hallo, Scrawny!"

Both May and Scrawny Will turned quickly.

"Father!" was May's delighted exclamation.

"Well, Crook, where did you spring from?" said Scrawny.

"Why, May, where have you been, and how is it you have found an old friend?"

"It's a long story, Crook," said Scrawny Will. "We were just going down to Baggs's to see if they had heard anything of you there."

"Not much," returned Crook Cripps. "I dasen't go there just now. Things are altogether too warm. My main object is to keep out of the way of Tom Blodgett. He wants me, or thinks he wants me, for one or two jobs."

"Only thinks so, I suppose, Crook," said Scrawny, sarcastically.

"In course. I'm just a gentleman of leisure, with a taste for sport, and the thick-headed police always make a dead set on gentlemen of my habits."

"It is an outrage, Crook, but they will do it," said Scrawny, with mock sympathy.

"Yes. So I'm going back to Pittsburg with my little girl."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Oh, that necklace. Will you give it to me now, please?" said May, addressing Scrawny.

"What necklace?" said Scrawny, innocently.

"What necklace is that?" put in Crook, anxiously. "You have that one I gave you safe, I hope, May."

"Well, Crook, it is safe enough, because I have it. But it looks very much like one my aunt lost a week or two ago, and I am going to show it to her," said Scrawny Will, sneeringly.

"Scrawny Will, I want that necklace," said Crook Cripps, in a dangerously soft and sweet voice.

"Crook Cripps, you will get that necklace when my aunt says it does not belong to her," replied Scrawny, in the same tone.

"I'll go with you to your aunt's," said Crook Cripps, as he made a motion to walk on with Scrawny Will.

"All right, Crook; come along. She lives next door to a police station, and her husband is a policeman who was detailed to work up the Montville Bank case at the time the job was done, and who gives all his spare hours now to looking up points connected with it. Come along. I'll introduce you to him and to my aunt, too. You'll find them very nice people."

Crook Cripps ground his teeth.

"See here, Crook," said Scrawny, confidentially. "It is no use getting mad. I'll take care of this necklace for a few weeks until I meet you in Pittsburg. I don't believe it is my aunt's, and I'll fix things all right with you on the day my boy wins that race from Stretcher Bull. Do you tumble?"

"You mean—"

"That's it."

"That your boy has got to win?"

"Exactly."

"Honor bright?"

"Straight up and down."

"Where is the boy?"

"That's what I don't know."

"Think any one's been fooling with him?"

"That's what I do," said Scrawny, scowling fiercely.

"Who?"

"Never mind. I know."

"But who d'ye mean—Frank Burton?"

"Curse him! Yes."

"Why don't you get even, by working his man?"

"I will, if I can."

"Trouble is, Stretcher Bull is so ridiculously square that you can't do nothin' with him," said Crook Cripps.

"I know it," acquiesced Scrawny, disconsolately. The three were walking slowly down Broadway during this conversation, when suddenly a great hubbub and shouting behind made them all turn.

"Call your confounded dog off!" said a handsome gentleman with plug hat and fashionable garments, as Crook Cripps met his eye.

In an instant Crook, Scrawny and May comprehended the trouble.

Sting, who had been modestly walking behind them, attending strictly to his own business, had been attacked by a little yelping black-and-tan, who had presumed to bite him on the leg.

No well-regulated bulldog could stand such an insult, and so Sting had caught the other dog by the neck and was giving him a wholesome shaking.

For the moment it looked as if Sting would be called off too late to save the life of the yelper. When a bulldog shakes anything he does it for all that is in him.

However, Crook rushed at Sting, caught him by his leather collar, and with some difficulty pulled him off the other dog.

The black-and-tan shook himself together and ran yelping behind a handsomely-dressed lady who was with the gentleman.

The lady and gentleman were our old friends, Miss Vavasour and Basil Montgomery, the actors, who had commissioned "Git Thar" Owney to find the stolen diamonds.

"Oh, my poor little Juno," said the lady, looking down at her still whining dog. "They have killed you!"

"Not a bit of it, madame," said Scrawny, with a low bow. "The dogs was only playing."

Miss Vavasour gave Scrawny a look of indignant contempt, which suddenly changed to one of eager astonishment.

"Basil," she whispered to her husband, breathlessly. "Well, my dear?"

"I know where my diamonds are."

"The deuce you do! Where are they?"

"That man has them."

Scrawny had turned away, and with Crook Cripps and May was walking slowly down town by this time.

"What man, my dear? I'm afraid the unpleasantness between Juno and that bulldog has upset your nerves so much that you imagine things which do not exist."

"No, I do not," said Miss Vavasour, positively. "I know that little man has my necklace. Moreover, I have seen that other big fellow before."

"Where?"

"I don't know exactly, but somewhere."

"In New York?"

"N—o—o," hesitatingly.



"Philadelphia?"  
"No."  
"Boston, Chicago, Brooklyn, Frisco, London, Jersey City, Timbuctoo?"  
"No—no. And I think you are very unkind to laugh at me," said Miss Vavasour, getting ready to cry.

"Where do you think it was?"  
"I have it!"  
"Thank Heaven!"  
"I know where I saw him!"  
"Where?"  
"Pittsburg."  
"Pittsburg?"  
"Yes."

"Where did you see him there, and when?"  
"The last time we were there. He was loafing around outside the theater, and I believe he had something to do with stealing my necklace."

"I do not see why you should suspect him, because he happened to be outside the theater, and is now in New York. Everybody comes to New York at some time or other," said the gentleman, with a cool smile that aggravated his better half to an almost unbearable extent.

"Basil Montgomery," said Miss Vavasour, solemnly, "that little man has my necklace."

"How do you know?"  
"I saw it."  
"What?"  
"I saw it when he stooped just now."

"Nonsense!"  
"No nonsense at all. He has it in one of his upper vest pockets, and when he bowed to me in that insolent way, I just caught a glimpse of the stones shining there."

Basil Montgomery laughed aloud.  
"My dear girl," he said, "you are an original. You see something glistening in the vest pocket of a man—a perfect stranger—and you at once jump to the conclusion that he is in possession of some diamonds that you lost several weeks ago in a city nearly five hundred miles away. Why, even allowing for the sake of argument, that he had some diamonds in his pocket, you have no particular reason to suppose that they were yours. Do you know how many million dollars worth of dressed diamonds there are estimated to be in the world?"

"Now, Basil, you need not try to change my opinion by talking statistics."

"I only wanted to show you that with the number of diamonds in existence, you could not be sure that you saw your particular diamonds in that man's pocket. That was all."

"It wasn't the diamonds that I noticed."

"What then?"  
"My large emerald."

"Your emerald?"  
"Yes."

"Are you sure about that?"  
"Positive."

Basil Montgomery whistled thoughtfully.  
"That alters the case," he said. "I will soon find out what he has in his pocket."

"How?"  
"I will ask him, and if necessary, charge him with theft," returned Basil, determinedly. "You walk on slowly. I will hurry after him."

"All right, dear. If you get my necklace back, I will say you are better than the whole detective force," said Miss Vavasour, with a delighted smile.

Basil Montgomery, though his friends said he was a dude, who thought more of the curl of his mustache and the set of his collar and necktie than anything else, could be serious enough when he chose. Moreover, beneath the surface of carelessness and laziness, there was a good deal of manhood. He was a dead-shot with the revolver, could row a mile with the best amateur who ever sat in a boat, and could handle the gloves like a professional pugilist. He was a dangerous man to fool with when his blood was up, as more than one "tough" had discovered to his cost ere now.

He walked swiftly down Broadway through the crowd, trying to catch sight of Scrawny Will and his companions.

It was no easy task, and he had traversed several blocks before he saw any signs of them.

Then he saw them just turning a corner.

Yes, there they were, walking rather faster than there seemed any occasion for.

He quickened his pace, and saw that Crook was looking over his shoulder as if apprehensive of pursuit.

"Hallo, there! Stop!" cried Basil holding up his hand.

But Crook Cripps's only response was to take May by the arm and hurry still more.

He evidently did not wish to have anything more to say to Basil Montgomery.

Scrawny Will was several steps ahead of Crook and May, and was making better time than any one.

"Hold on there, I tell you!" called Basil again, as he broke into a run.

He was rapidly diminishing the distance between himself and the others and was just about to grasp Crook Cripps by the shoulder, when a burly fellow, just stepping out of a doorway, came right in his way and jostled against him.

"Who are yer shovin'?" said the burly man.

"Get out of my road," said Basil.

"Git out o' my road," said the other. "Guess you ain't got any mortgage on this sidewalk, hev yer?"

Basil Montgomery saw that Crook Cripps was getting away from him, and that Scrawny Will had already disappeared. Impetuously he put his hand on the stranger's breast and gave him a vigorous push.

Like a flash the right hand of the other shot out

and gave Basil a stinger in the mouth that jarred him until he thought every tooth in his head was loosened.

Basil did not stop to groan, however. He was too handy with his fists for that.

The knuckles of his assailant had hardly touched his face before Basil had countered and put one in the big man's eye that sent it into mourning right away.

"Oho! my fine swell! You think you can spar, do you? Come on an' I'll paste yer till yer own mother won't know yer from a plate of East side hash."

It was a quiet side-street, and not a soul besides themselves was to be seen. Scrawny, Crook Cripps, May and the bulldog had all got clear away.

Basil needed no second invitation from his big antagonist, and at it they went hammer-and-tongs.

The blows flew thick and fast for a second or two, and then both men had acquired a good deal of respect for each other's science.

The stranger, who had every appearance of the toughest kind of "sport," was rather surprised that a dandy-looking, well-dressed gentleman like Basil Montgomery, could give him such a whirl, while the latter realized that, however ignorant and uneducated the big man might be, he had certainly mastered the science of boxing.

They sparred for breath, walking cautiously around each other and trying to get an opening.

Then Basil's left hand reached the other's chest, while his right lifted him under the chin. In return he got a crash on the forehead that made his head ache and sent his silk hat spinning into the middle of the street.

Bang! Bang! Slap! Slap! Crash! Crash!

A well-directed blow, straight from the shoulder, and Basil stretched his antagonist at full length on the sidewalk, his head striking a lamp-post and knocking him insensible for a moment.

Basil Montgomery picked up his hat and tried to smooth his ruffled plumage, just as Miss Vavasour arrived on the spot and fainted away at the sight of the blood on her husband's face and the apparently dead man at his feet.

"Oh, Basil! What is the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear, only I have lost track of the little man who has your necklace," said Basil, looking rather ashamed of himself.

"But, Basil, you are hurt!"

"No, mum, he ain't hurt," said the big man, on the sidewalk, as he sat up and felt his head. "But I'm dog-goned if he ain't hurt me. He strikes a blow like a thousand of brick, and I respect him. Didn't think any swell could lay me out like that. An' if there's anything as Jim Cripps kin do ter oblige you, he's goin' to do it, now. You hear me. I saw a feller runnin' away from you who I thought was dead, as he ought ter be. If you want to get the nippers on him I'll help yer all I can."

"That little man—do you know him?" asked Basil, as Jim Cripps arose to his feet.

"Know him! Well, I guess there ain't no one as knows Scrawny Will better nor I do, and he's played dirt on me, too."

"Can you tell me where I can find him?" asked Basil, eagerly.

"I know where you can find him next week," said Jim Cripps.

"Where?"  
"Pittsburg."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes. He's a engineering a boat race there for the 6th of July, between an unknown and Stretcher Bull, an' he'll be there right along until the event comes off."

"I've got five hundred on that unknown myself," said Basil, "but I didn't know that little man had anything to do with it. Could you go to Pittsburg with me next week if I made it worth your while?"

"I'll go anyhow, though in course I ain't above making a ten-dollar bill in an honest way," returned Jim Cripps.

"Very well. Then call on me at ten o'clock tomorrow morning at 702 37<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> street, and we'll make further arrangements," said Basil Montgomery.

"Good night."

"Good-night," answered Jim Cripps, as the lady and gentleman sauntered away, adding: "Gosh! He does strike a heavy blow. I'd like to see him in full trainin'. Well, the two of us ought to be a match for Scrawny Will, even if he can fall off a house without gittin' hurt."

## CHAPTER XI.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE TURNS UP AGAIN.

WHEN "Git Thar" Owney felt his head strike the arch and found he could not get his mouth and nostrils out of the water he gave himself up for lost.

He had held his breath so long that his brain was reeling.

The force with which he had come in collision with the arch when he arose was sufficient to send him down again several feet.

He ceased struggling for he felt that it was of no use trying to swim any longer, and besides it is doubtful if he could have done so anyhow, for his senses were fast leaving him, while the fearful singing and rumbling in his ears were getting louder and louder.

He seemed to forget where he was, and the pain of suffocation that had at first caused him such agony was giving way to an almost pleasurable sensation, while, like a panorama all the events of his short but busy life passed in review before him. He saw himself, a curly-headed boy playing at his mother's knee, in far-away Pittsburg. Then he was trying his strength and skill with the oar on the forest-lined waters of the Monongahela or between the grassy slopes fringing the Ohio. Anon he

saw himself as a detective hunting down criminals in the slums of Pittsburg or among the disused coal mines and woods of the surrounding country. Next a sweet face that he had seen only a day or two before, but that had impressed itself upon his youthful imagination like a beautiful dream, effaced everything else, and he thought he was talking to May, the young, innocent girl whom he had found so suddenly and strangely thrown on his protection in a large city. Then—blackness!

He lost consciousness, with the water gurgling in his ears and his curly hair thrown hither and thither across his white face with the action of the stream, while the gray rat swam around him and seemed to be wondering whether he was really dead.

"Haul up, Dave! By Jehoshaphat, I believe I've got something."

"What is it?"

"If you tell me I'll give it to you."

"What do you think it is?"

"I'll tell you in a minute."

The speakers were two men, in a stout yawl, who were fishing for anything that might turn up at the mouth of a great sewer in the East River.

Their fishing tackle consisted of two stout ropes attached to a large round basket, with grappling-hooks hung around it to seize any stray article that might escape the basket.

The sewer where they were fishing was that through which "Git Thar" Owney had been trying to make his way to the river.

The men were of the regular river rat description. All was fish that came to their net. Sometimes it was jewelry, sometimes bank-notes, sodden and almost destroyed, but which could often be redeemed, when the printing and numbers could be deciphered at all by the aid of powerful magnifying glasses. Sometimes bundles of clothing, table linen, dry goods, or what not stolen in some midnight raid on a large store, and which the thieves, not daring to keep on account of a hot pursuit, had dropped into the ever convenient sewer. Sometimes the "fish" would be of a ghastly kind—the corpse of some victim of robbery and murder, sent to find a nameless grave in the river that flows so swiftly toward the Atlantic.

Whatever the "fish" might be, it could nearly always be turned to the profit of those who angled for it.

"It's mighty heavy," said the man called Dave, as he tugged at the rope.

"Never mind; pull away," responded the other.

"One more, and—there she is."

"You're wrong. It ain't no she. It's a he," laughed Dave, cheerily. "Blest if I didn't think it was a stiff, from the way it pulled."

"It's a boy, Dave."

"Well, I know it. A blind man could see that. Give me a hand till we get him into the boat."

The two men seized Owney, and, with a simultaneous swing, lifted him over the gunwale and laid him flat on the bottom of the yawl.

"Guess he's a goner," said Dave, looking down at Owney's white face.

"Dunno about that. He ain't been in the water very long, that's sure. It's worth tryin'. Grab that other oar and give way."

Without another word the two men dropped into their places at the oars, and with a few long, powerful strokes, rowed to the dock near where the mouth of the great sewer was hidden under the water while Owney's white face shown like a marble mask in the cold moonlight.

For half an hour did the two rough but kindly "fishermen" apply all the orthodox remedies for the restoration of the apparently drowned. They rolled the patient on a barrel; they rubbed and pounded him; they stood him on his head to pour the water out of him, and they lifted him to his feet to try and set his heart and brain working.

"I'm afraid he is gone, Dave," said one of the men, as Owney still showed no signs of life.

"Dunno but what he is, myself," responded Dave, regretfully.

"Ahey, there!" shouted a voice from the river.

"Ahey!" answered Dave and his companion in a breath.

A man in a light boat, resting easily on his oars, was visible in the early morning light. He wore simply an undershirt and drawers, and was evidently an athlete taking his daily practice.

"What are you doin' there?" asked the man in the boat.

"Trying to worry some life into a drowned boy."

Without another word the man in the boat pulled vigorously to the shore, and ran up the water-worn steps of the dock to where Owney and his would-be rescuers were.

The new-comer gave one swift glance at Owney's pallid face, and said:

"Just what I thought."

"What?" asked Dave.

"Look here, stranger," said the athlete. "I know this boy, and he's as square a man as I ever met. We have got to bring him around. Stretcher Bull ain't goin' to see him wiped out this way if anything can save him."

"Gosh! Are you Stretcher Bull?" asked Dave, in admiring tones.

"That's what I am."

"Then let me shake hands with the squarest man as ever stepped into a boat. I've got a fifty up on you for the sixth of July race, and I know you will win my money for me."

"I'll try," replied Stretcher Bull, as he permitted the other to wring his hand. "But that ain't the point just now. I want to save this boy."

As he spoke Owney heaved a faint sigh.

"Jump into my boat and give me that brandy



under the seat, *quick!*" cried Stretcher, as he sprung over to Owney and commenced rubbing him all over.

The bottle contained brandy, smuggled into the boat by Stretcher for his own delectation.

A few drops poured down Owney's throat revived him, and soon he was able to stand up and look wildly around.

Then he recognized Stretcher Bull.

"Hallo, Stretcher, how did you get here?"

"Just by accident."

"I guess I was nearly a goner," observed Owney, passing his hand across his eyes.

"Guess you were. But I'm mighty glad you pulled through, all right," returned Stretcher Bull.

"I see the opening of the sewer is away under water. How did you get out?"

"I'll never tell you."

"Well, never mind, as long as you made it. Where are you going now?"

"Oh, I'll get back to Pittsburg. I have to meet you on the 6th of July, and I can see that if I'm going to stand any show with you at all, I'll have to get into training right away," said Owney, with a smile.

"Well, I'm goin' to give you as good a shake as I can, that's a fact," returned Stretcher Bull.

"Well, young one, you seem to be all right now, and if you are a friend of Stretcher Bull's I know he will look after you."

"You bet!" declared Stretcher, emphatically.

"Good-by," said Dave, and his partner, as they jumped into their boat. "We have some business to attend to up the river."

"Well, look here. Call at Mooney Baggs's to-night and ask for me, and I'll make it all right with you for what you've done for my friend here."

"We don't want nothin' for that," answered Dave, "but we'll call and see yer just for friendship, like. Good-by!"

"So-long!"

"Wish yer luck, young one."

"Same to you," responded Owney.

"Now, you had better keep a sharp watch on Frank Burton, because he'll trap you again if he can. I know him," said Stretcher Bull to Owney, as they were alone. "He has an idea that the men what's handlin' you have been tryin' a foul move, and Frank is a terror when he gets that notion. I think your best plan would be to get to Pittsburg and go into trainin' at once. And whatever you do, don't let Frank Burton ever know that I helped you out of the scrape."

"What do you take me for?"

"Do you think you can meet me here in an hour or a little more?" asked Stretcher. "I'll take my boat home, get some clothes on and bring you some money to take you to Pittsburg."

"I don't need money. I have enough," returned "Git Thar" Owney, "but I thank you all the same. If all sports were like you, it would be a good deal better for the profession, and we shouldn't all be looked down on as we are."

"You are right about that," said Stretcher Bull. "Well, see me here in an hour, anyhow. You ain't well enough yet to get walking around much, and you may just as well sit here on a barrel and rest yourself on a barrel until I get back. Besides, I want to give you some dry clothes, anyhow."

"Just as you say," returned Owney, as he sunk down on a barrel wearily.

His exertions and his narrow escape from drowning had exhausted him more than he had at first imagined.

He watched Stretcher Bull as he pulled away with a long easy stroke, and he admitted to himself that he would find his work out for him on the Hulton course on the 6th of July.

The day was warm, and as the sun got nigher in the heavens its grateful rays exercised a somnolent influence on "Git Thar" Owney, and he dropped on the ground in the shadow of the barrel upon which he had been sitting and half-dozed.

Suddenly he heard footsteps, and then a voice that thrilled him through and through.

It was the voice of May Cripps.

"When are we going back, father?" she was saying.

"Ah, she has found her father, then," thought Owney. "I won't show myself just yet."

"To-day," was her father's gruff reply. "There ain't nothing to stay here for now. I'd like to find that Scrawny. He was to meet me here and tell me about his scheme, and then we were to make arrangements for certain business to be done in Pittsburg."

Crook Cripps was talking more to himself than to his daughter evidently.

"I wish I knew what that scheme was," thought Owney. "I suppose it is some monkey business on the race, but I'll euvre them on that, sure as my name is 'Git Thar' Owney."

He was about to rise and speak to May when he saw something else that made him drop again in sheer astonishment.

Walking slowly toward him, with his gaze fixed so intently on something in his hand that he did not notice Owney lying in the shadow of the barrel, was Scrawny Will.

The something in his hand was the diamond necklace, which Owney supposed had long since been broken up and the stones sold by the two swill-mobsmen.

#### CHAPTER XII.

THE PLOT TO "KILL" "GIT THAR" OWNEY'S BOAT AND HOW IT WORKED.

THE scene shifts to a sporting hotel on the banks of the Alleghany River, and the time to the evening of

the 5th of July—the night before the great boat-race between Stretcher Bull and "Git Thar" Owney on the Hulton course.

Owney is in his training quarters.

He is put to bed every night at nine o'clock. He is made to eat plain mutton-chops and beefsteaks. He has been compelled to take brisk walks wrapped in blankets. He has practiced with the dumb-bells and the clubs, and he has taken a daily spin on the river, until his trainer, who is also the proprietor of the hotel, has pronounced him in the very pink of condition.

"Well, Owney, how goes it this evening?" asked Scrawny Will, as he entered the young oarsman's private room, where he was sitting quietly looking over the river and thinking of the morrow's work.

"All right," said Owney. "I guess I'll 'git thar.' I'll try good and hard."

"That's right, my boy—that's right," Stretcher Bull thinks he is a good man—and so he is—but he does too much rowing with his mouth. We can get away with him."

Scrawny Will left the room, and Owney muttered: "Yes, but you can't get away with me, Scrawny Will, though you may think you can. I'll win this race for you because my reputation is staked on it, and because I am square. But, afterward, if I don't get that necklace, you will find yourself in jail in Pittsburg before you know what has struck you. I am watching you. You think I don't know anything about it because I haven't menti'ned it, but I have got you right in my clutch, and 'Git Thar' Owney seldom gets left."

From this it will be seen that Owney had not let Scrawny Will know that he had seen the necklace in his hand on the dock in New York. He had kept a close watch on Scrawny since they had come to Pittsburg, and was sure that the necklace was still in his possession.

Crook Cripps had been to see him once or twice with Scrawny Will since he had settled down to training, but he had never seen anything of May, though he heard she was in the city with her father.

"Git Thar" Owney sat an hour or more looking out of the window, until the shadows that had been spreading from East to West settled over the river, and warned him that it was time to retire.

Scrawny Will entered the room again to see that his man was safe in bed.

Owney turned in, shut his eyes, and, with a healthy fatigue that made his rest enjoyable, dropped to sleep as he heard Scrawny Will locking the door on the outside, preparatory to going to sleep in the outer room himself.

How long "Git Thar" Owney had been asleep when he awoke with a start he could not tell for certain, but he calculated that it must have been between three and four hours, which would make it now something after midnight.

What had awoken him?

He could not tell!

But as he sat up in his bed a figure suddenly appeared at his window and looked into the room, dimly lighted by a coal-oil lamp turned very low.

His room was on the top floor of the building, a frame addition to the regular hotel, and slightly overhung the water. In the apartment immediately beneath were stored boats, oars, and rowing-tackle generally, the racing shell in which Owney was to try conclusions with Stretcher Bull on the morrow, carefully shrouded in canvas, occupying a large portion of the space.

How could this person have reached the window, so far from the ground?

Owney was not the one, however, to remain long in doubt.

He sprang out of bed in his undershirt and drawers, and ran to the window.

Then he almost sunk to the floor with astonishment as he recognized the face pressed against the glass.

It was the face of May Cripps!

She held up her finger to warn him against making any noise, and motioned to him to raise the window.

He silently obeyed.

"May," he said.

"Hush! I am here to help you. I have climbed up this ladder because I knew I must act quickly if I was to do any good."

"What do you mean?"

"They are going to spoil your boat."

"Who?"

"Frank Burton and Jim Cripps."

"Jim Cripps—your uncle?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I heard them talking about it."

"But I thought Jim Cripps was a friend of Scrawny Will's."

"He was, but is not now."

"Why?"

"Oh, they had a terrible quarrel some weeks ago, in New York, and now Uncle Jim would do anything to hurt Scrawny."

"Why did you come to warn me?"

The young girl blushed. It was not for her to tell the gallant young oarsman that he had made an impression on her maiden heart; but "Git Thar" Owney had tact enough to understand, more perhaps because a new and strange thrill had passed through his own being at sight of the modest girl who had taken so much trouble on his behalf, than from anything else he could see in her manner.

"I did not want to see you lose a race through no fault of your own, when you had been so kind to me," she said. "And you surely will if you do not prevent their carrying out their intentions."

"What are they going to do?"

"Frank Burton and Uncle Jim will get into the

room where your boat is to-night, and will bore three or four holes in the bottom."

"The scoundrels!" ejaculated Owney.

"Then they will fill the holes with a composition that will melt in the water in a short time."

"The old scheme," he said; "but it won't work this time."

"Uncle Jim is smart at anything like that."

"The deuce he is!"

"Yes, and he will put varnish and such stuff over the places where the holes have been made and filled up, and no one will be able to see it has been touched."

"Thank you, May; you are a good girl. I shall know what to do. Now, you had better go. This is a bad time of night for you to be out. I hope you will get home safely."

"Never fear," she replied. "No one will interfere with me. But you—beware! Frank Burton and Uncle Jim are desperate when things go against them."

"All right, May. Good-night," said "Git Thar" Owney. "Carefully down the ladder."

She went down two or three steps and then paused, looking up at him.

"Would you—would you—wear a ribbon to-morrow if I gave it to you?" she asked, falteringly.

"Would I? Of course I would," returned Owney.

"And I would carry it past the judges' boat first in the race, too, as sure as my name is 'Git Thar' Owney."

"Then here it is. It is blue. I made it up into a bow in the hope that you would wear it in the race."

She handed it up to him with a smile.

He took it carefully and pressed it to his lips, as he waved a farewell.

He watched her until she disappeared in the shadows. Then gently placing the bright blue ribbon on the table, he made preparations to thwart Frank Burton and Jim Cripps in their nefarious designs.

First he armed himself with a heavy revolver and the dirk knife given to him by Stretcher Bull in New York, and with which he had never faltered.

Then, with a bull's-eye lantern that was part of the furniture of the room, in his hand, he crept out of the window, and went softly down the ladder.

"I could have got Scrawny to help me if I had wanted him, I suppose; but I prefer to do this job alone, so I won't disturb him. He is asleep in the outer room, and he can stay there."

When Owney had got half-way down the ladder, he was opposite a window in the storage-room where his boat lay.

He easily gained entrance.

"Now for this ladder. We don't want that here," he thought, as he gave it a shove and sent it spinning to the ground. "I guess I shall give Frank Burton and Jim Cripps a little surprise to-night. They haven't laid out 'Git Thar' Owney this time."

He looked around the room with his lantern.

Yes, there was his boat, in its white canvas covering, looking ghastly in the dim light of the bull's-eye.

He examined the boat critically.

It had not been tampered with, so far.

But it would not be long before the two men would be there to carry out their villainous scheme.

They were determined to make Owney lose the race somehow—Jim Cripps to spite Scrawny Will, and Frank Burton to win the money he had put up on Stretcher Bull.

Basil Montgomery had been unable, owing to professional engagements, to come to Pittsburg yet, but he would be present at the race to-morrow, to get his wife's diamonds from Scrawny Will, or put him in jail.

Scrawny Will was being closely pursued, and by two people whom he did not suspect—"Git Thar" Owney and Basil Montgomery.

The latter had "hedged" all his bets on "Git Thar" Owney, so that he would not lose anything whichever way the race went.

"I must hide somewhere," thought Owney, "so that I can jump out on them as soon as they get to work and catch them in the act."

"Git Thar" Owney laughed softly to himself as he thought of their probable consternation when they saw him.

"Here's the place, right behind the boat," he muttered. "Here is a little hole made on purpose. And, by gosh! here they come."

He hastily stowed himself away in his ambush, and felt that his revolver and knife were ready for instant action, just as he heard a noise as of a rope being thrown against the wooden side of the house.

"They are trying to hook ropes to the window-sill," he thought. "Pretty cute trick."

In another minute the hooks caught in the wooden window-sill and he heard a scuffling outside as of men scrambling up the ropes.

Then Jim Cripps's burly form appeared at the window, which Owney had closed when he entered.

Jim Cripps raised the sash and stepped inside. Hardly had he done so when Frank Burton climbed up and stood beside him.

"Now, Jim, be quick. There is no time to waste," said Frank Burton.

"Oh, give us a rest," was Jim Cripps's surly response. "I know what I have to do and I can do it in good shape, but I don't want to be hurried and flurried. There is no danger. No one can hear anything. Besides I shan't make any noise."

He drew from beneath his coat a long auger and a small bull's-eye lantern.

"Now, Frank," he said, "you hold the lantern and show me a light where I want it."

Frank Burton obediently took the lantern. He knew that for the time being he must humor Jim



Cripps, and he never let his temper run away with his policy.

"That's right," said Jim. "Hold it right there while I lift off the canvas."

With dexterous hands he removed the canvas from the boat and showed her beautiful smooth keel.

"Seems almost a pity to spoil it, don't it, Frank," said Cripps. "Darned if she ain't a picture."

"Yes, it's a pity to spoil it," said Frank Burton, sarcastically. "Leave it as it is, so that Scrawny Will will make a pile on the race."

"Curse him!" hissed Jim Cripps. "Where's that auger? I wish I was goin' to dig it into his heart!"

He placed the point of the auger against the varnished surface of the boat's keel.

One twist and a hole would be bored clean through.

But the twist was never made.

"Git Thar" Owney was only waiting for the critical moment to show himself.

As soon as he saw in the light of the lantern that the work was to be done, he acted.

Acted swiftly and surely!

Jim Cripps dropped like a log!

"Git Thar" Owney had given him a rap with the butt of his heavy pistol that made his head ache and stunned him for the moment.

"I guess I 'got thar' just in time, eh?" said Owney, with a smile.

"Don't know about that!" exclaimed Frank Burton, as he sprung upon Owney and bore him backward to the ground.

The attack was so sudden that "Git Thar" Owney had no opportunity to defend himself.

"Now, I could kill you, if I wanted to," hissed Frank Burton in Owney's ear, "and no one would be any the wiser."

"Could you?" said Owney, sarcastically.

"Yes; you know I could."

"Why don't you do it, then?"

"Git Thar" Owney's reckless courage would not allow him to ask mercy of any one, least of all of a man whom he had caught in such a despicable act.

"Curse you, I will do it!" howled Frank Burton, in a perfect frenzy of rage, very different to his usual cool demeanor.

He drew a bowie-knife from an inside pocket, and made a lunge at Owney's throat.

The young oarsman threw up his hand and arrested the blow.

It was but a momentary respite, however.

Owney's left hand was doubled underneath him, so that he could not get it out, and Frank Burton could easily hold his right.

Again the knife was raised.

"Good-by, old world," gasped Owney. "Guess I'm gone this time!"

There was not a shadow of mercy in Frank Burton's blazing eyes. Nothing but a fierce, murderous thirst for "Git Thar" Owney's life.

Things did indeed look critical for Owney.

Frank Burton poised the knife in the air for a moment.

He meant the blow to be sure.

He must strike to kill!

If Owney escaped, it would be to blazon forth to the world that Frank Burton—who had always boasted that he was a "square" man—had been caught trying to "kill" a boat just before a race.

That would be his rum as a sport, and he could not stand it.

Down came the knife.

But only half-way.

An oar was suddenly thrust out from the darkness, and knocked the knife out of Frank Burton's hand.

Then another blow from the oar stretched him senseless by the side of Jim Cripps, who was just regaining consciousness.

"Git Thar" Owney was on his feet in a second.

Who was his unknown deliverer?

He just caught a glimpse of a female figure climbing out of the window, and heard a soft voice say:

"I am going home now. I was afraid they might perhaps be too much for you, and so I watched. Don't be angry. Wear my ribbon in the race, and win if you can."

And she was gone!

"Yes, May, I will wear your ribbon, and if I win the race I shall know that it was through you I was enabled to git thar," murmured Owney, as he turned to look after his two foes.

"Here, quit that, Jim Cripps," he said, sternly.

"You can't play any monkey business with me. Put that auger down or I'll shoot you through the head as if you were a rat."

Jim Cripps dropped the auger with a discomfited air and looked at the shining barrel of Owney's pistol which showed plainly in the moonlight.

"I've got the drop on you, Jim Cripps; so climb out of that window."

Cripps did as he was told, went down the ladder and disappeared in the darkness.

"Now, Frank Burton, it is your time," said Owney, as he saw that the other was beginning to realize that he was alive.

"What are you going to do?" asked Frank Burton, sullenly.

"I could kill you if I wanted to," said Owney, ironically, as he pointed his pistol full at Frank Burton's head.

Burton writhed as he heard his own words repeated.

"But I don't mean to do it," said "Git Thar" Owney. "At least, not this time. Git!"

"What?"

"Git!"

"Do you mean to give me away?" asked Frank Burton, as he edged toward the window, with his eye fixed on the barrel of the revolver in Owney's hand.

"Git!"

"All right! I'm sorry I tried to fix your boat. You are full of grit and darned if I don't admire you. Will you shake?" holding out his hand.

"Git!!!"

Frank Burton "got."

# CHAPTER XIII.

## THE LAST OF JIM CRIPPS.

WHILE "Git Thar" Owney had been going through the adventures narrated in the last chapter Scrawny Will had not been so quietly sleeping in the outer room as Owney had supposed.

Scrawny had other business to look after.

He had staked nearly his whole pile on "Git Thar" Owney, and he meant to win.

Certainly his man was in good condition, and everything pointed to sur-victory.

But, on the other hand, Stretcher Bull had never been beaten yet, and was said to be trained to exactly the right point, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, and with his muscles hardened to a steel-like pitch of perfection.

His training quarters were about a mile below those of Owney's, and he had been kept down to work steadily for the last month.

"Don't like it," thought Scrawny, with a dubious shake of the head, after he had looked Owney in his room.

The more Scrawny Will thought over it, the less he relished the idea of Stretcher Bull being so "fit" for the race.

He would have liked his man to have all the odds in his favor, so that his defeat would be an impossibility.

He backed Owney's rowing because he believed there was money in it, and cared nothing at all about the development of the highest physical manhood, which is, or should be, the true object of athletic sports.

"I must get at Stretcher somehow," reflected Scrawny Will.

But how?

He would go for a stroll and reconnoiter.

Owney was safe enough in his room, and there was no risk in his going away for an hour or so by himself.

He quietly slipped down the stairs and out into the night.

Everything was still, the only sounds being the murmuring of the summer breeze through the leaves of the sycamores, willows, and maples and the gentle rippling of the waters of the river.

Scrawny walked along the river-bank until he came to a small, but well-built shanty-boat, half in, half out of the water.

In this amphibious dwelling Stretcher Bull was being got in shape for the race with the boy-oarsman, "Git Thar" Owney.

All was dark save one small window near the stern, which lay out in the water.

"Too bad!" muttered Scrawny. "If that light was on shore instead of out in the river, I could peep in and perhaps get a chance at Stretcher."

He sat down on a piece of lumber that had been washed ashore in a freshet at some time or other, and thought over the situation.

Ah! A small boat!

He just caught sight of it, moored to the shanty-boat on the other side.

Scrawny Will did not hesitate to appropriate the small boat. There was no one around, and it would enable him to do what he desired—get to the window where the light was still gleaming like a bright star; so he stepped softly into the boat and unfastened the rope by which it was secured. There were no oars, but Scrawny did not care about that; he could guide himself to the stern of the shanty-boat by holding to the sides and passing himself along hand over hand.

In a few minutes he had gained the desired position.

Cautiously he drew himself up until he could just peep in by holding to the window-sill.

He was compelled to lift his feet out of the small boat, but he found a ledge on the large one on which he could just rest his toes.

"By Caesar, there he is!" ejaculated Scrawny delightedly. "Alone, too!"

He could see Stretcher Bull's magnificent physique lying easily on a cot-bed, with the light of a lamp on the table shining full in his face.

"Yes, he is 'fit,' that's a fact. Owney's a good boy and will row to win. I know; but I am afraid of a man who looks as well as that. I must get at him!"

Stretcher Bull turned over and threw one of his hands carelessly above his head.

The slight noise Scrawny had made had disturbed him, but he did not open his eyes.

"What shall I do next?" thought Scrawny Will, as his foot slipped and he almost fell into the river.

Stretcher Bull settled the matter for him by suddenly opening his eyes and looking straight into his face.

"Who are you and what do you want?" roared Stretcher, springing from his cot and coming to the window, which, by the way, was open, to air the small apartment.

"Nothing, Stretcher," said Scrawny, apologetically. "I just wanted to see how you looked, that was all."

"Oh, that was all, was it?" said Stretcher, mockingly.

"Yes, that was all; and I'm glad to see you are in such good condition."

"Oh, you are?"

"Yes."

"It pleases you better than if I was all broken up, does it?"

"Why, of course. I don't care about the money I have up. I just want to see a good square race between you and Owney, and I want to see the best man win, whether I make or lose."

"That's it, is it?"

"Sure as you are born. Honor bright!" returned Scrawny Will.

"You lie!"

Stretcher Bull hurled this at Scrawny Will with a venomous intensity that was in awful contrast with the smiling mockery in which he had indulged previously.

Scrawny Will's small eyes blazed for an instant, and if he could have reached his pistol he would undoubtedly have sent a bullet crashing through Stretcher Bull's brain.

But he had to hold on with both hands to keep himself on the narrow ledge, and was powerless to resent the insult.

As soon as he had caught his breath he was thankful that he had not been able to give way to his vengeful feelings.

"There is no sense in your talking that way, Stretcher," said Scrawny, with an injured air.

"Yes, there is plenty of sense in it," replied Stretcher Bull. "I know you, Scrawny Will, and I know that if you were an honest man you wouldn't be sneaking around my training quarters in the middle of the night. That's what! And I want you to get out of this right away."

"I don't believe I can," said Scrawny, as he looked down and saw that the small boat had floated away.

"Why not?" asked Stretcher Bull.

"Because the boat I came in has drifted downstream. Can't you let me come through your room?"

Stretcher Bull's only answer was to give Scrawny a sudden and violent push that sent him sprawling into the river.

Fortunately for himself, Scrawny Will was a good swimmer.

He struck out for the land and in a few minutes was safe on shore, where he could yet hear Stretcher Bull's mocking laughter echoing in the night air.

"Very well, Stretcher Bull," he muttered vindictively as he shook his clinched fist at that part of the shanty-boat where the woman's room was situated. "You sha'n't win the race now. I'll beat you at any cost. It is no longer a question of money with me, but revenge."

He sat down on the bank in his wet clothes and tried to decide what he shall do.

Could he get at Stretcher Bull's boat?

No; that was too well taken care of. He didn't even know where it was. It would not be produced until just in time for the race. Stretcher had been practicing in it for the last few days to get used to it, he knew, but it was always taken away as soon as the oarsman stepped out of it and even Stretcher himself did not know where it was kept. Frank Burton was a man who did not put temptations in the way of his adversaries if he could help it.

No he could not hope to "fix" the boat!

But Stretcher! He might yet be able to give him something that would make him sick.

He sat still for an hour, thinking—thinking!

"I'll try it again!" he ejaculated, at last springing to his feet.

But how to get around to the window!

The little boat had drifted away down-stream, and was entirely lost for the present.

He must hit upon some other plan.

Scrawny Will was fertile in expedients.

In a minute he had made up his mind what to do.

The moon was rising and shed a faint glimmer on the scene over the edge of a bank of clouds.

"That's all right," thought Scrawny. "There is not enough light to give me away, and it will help me to see where I am going."

He crept softly on board the shanty boat—on the end that lay ashore—and, with the agility of a cat, climbed on the roof of the long cabin that ran to the extreme end, in the water.

Cautiously he stole along until he knew that he was immediately on Stretcher Bull's portion of the craft.

Was the oarsman asleep again?

That was the first thing to find out.

Scrawny Will lay at full length on the roof of the cabin and noiselessly put his head over the edge until he could look, upside down in the window.

Stretcher Bull was lying on the cot bed again, fast asleep.

His little controversy with Scrawny Will seemed to have added a zest to his slumbers, for his sleep were sounder than before.

"That's all right," muttered Scrawny. "I'll fix you this time, Stretcher Bull, and don't you forget it."

He took off his shoes and put them down on the roof.

Then he hastily let himself down until his feet were on the window-sill of Stretcher Bull's cabin.

Another movement and he was inside the room.

He walked softly to the side of the sleeper, and, bending down, listened for a few seconds to his regular breathing.

He is safe enough for three or four hours unless there is an earthquake or somebody fires a cannon at his ear. He sleeps like a log."

By the side of Stretcher Bull, on his small table, was a glass of water, in which floated a lump of ice.

Scrawny took up the glass and looked at its contents thoughtfully.



"Ice-water," he muttered. "Um! Guess Stretcher Bull don't take much stock in such a thin drink as that, but I suppose he can't get anything better while he is in training."

He put the glass down and felt in a pocket inside his vest.

"Yes, here it is."

He drew forth a small vial, containing a colorless liquid.

"Looks like water, but a darned sight more useful," he soliloquized.

Again he bent down to listen to Stretcher Bull's breathing.

All safe!

Then he went to the window and looked out.

There was nothing to be seen save the water shimmering in the moonlight and the forest-fringed shore on the other side.

The door?

Locked!

Stealthily Scrawny Will uncorked the little vial and poured a dozen drops of the colorless liquid into the glass of ice-water.

"Now," he muttered, exultingly, "let Stretcher Bull drink that water and if he does not break down unaccountably before the end of the race, my name is not Scrawny Will."

He shook his fist at the sleeper in a spirit of triumphant devilry that made him look more unprepossessing than usual.

"Yes," he continued, "I do not study pharmacy for nothing. No poisoning or anything of that kind. Too dangerous altogether. But a little medicine, that will not take effect until the patient is warmed up by violent exertion. Then, at a critical moment, an unaccountable giving out all over—a weakening of muscles, a shortening of wind, and the man out of the race. Oh! I'll fix you, Stretcher Bull, and people will swear you gave the race away. That will hurt you worse than anything, and I shall make the money."

Scrawny Will nearly chuckled out loud as he thought of the trick he was playing.

But, hold! How did he know that Stretcher Bull would drink the water?

He must make sure of that before he left.

He looked sharply around the small room and smiled as he observed the dishes and fragments of Stretcher Bull's supper in one corner.

The very thing!

Among the articles on the tray was a salt-cellar.

He put some of the salt into his left hand and stepped to the side of the bed.

Then he took a pinch of salt in his fingers and rubbed it gently between Stretcher Bull's lips.

The sleeper moved slightly and licked the salt from his lips.

Scrawny Will grinned a diabolical grin.

He put more salt on the sleeper's lips and ran it down into the mouth.

He repeated this several times, until Stretcher Bull had consumed about a teaspoonful of salt.

"There," said Scrawny, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Now when he wakes he will be so thirsty that he will jump for that ice-water first thing, and feel like drinking a bucketful afterward."

He shook his fist once more close to Stretcher Bull's unconscious face, and turned away to make his exit through the window.

Then he stopped, while his face was turned with a horror-stricken expression toward the door.

It was not ordinary fear that showed in his distended eyes and blanched cheeks.

It was an awful terror, such as might have been provoked by some supernatural apparition!

He seemed frozen to the spot on which he stood!

Involuntarily his lips seemed to shape themselves to words he could not utter.

What did he see?

He saw a face, flushed and yet rigid, with eyeballs, blaring like those of a hungry tiger, rolling in blood-red sockets, with a mouth distended so that two rows of grinning teeth were exposed and with foam bubbling from the lips as the face worked in insanity.

Too well Scrawny Will knew the symptoms.

They were those of hydrophobia!

The face was the face of Jim Cripps, and the effect of the bites Sting had given him in New York weeks ago was just becoming visible.

With a howl that was half a bark, he leaped toward Scrawny Will.

Scrawny sprung back and stood trembling in a corner with his eyes fixed in fascination upon the distorted features of Jim Cripps.

"What's the racket?" said Stretcher Bull, sitting up in bed half-asleep, and trying to comprehend the reason for Cripps's and Scrawny Will's presence.

Jim Cripps's right hand was grasping the edge of the table so tightly that the knuckles were white, as his rolling eyeballs roamed from Scrawny Will to Stretcher Bull.

"Hold him!" gasped Scrawny. "It is hydrophobia. The dog went mad three weeks ago and was shot. Hold him!"

Stretcher Bull did not seem to understand.

Suddenly Jim Cripps caught sight of the ice-water in the glass.

His convulsions returned with tenfold violence.

With one sweep of his hand he knocked the glass to the floor smashing it into a hundred fragments.

"What's the matter, Jim?" asked Stretcher Bull, soothingly. "By the Lord, he's got 'em again."

The only explanation Stretcher could offer for Jim Cripps's insanity was whisky.

He thought it a case of delirium tremens.

With another howl, Jim Cripps darted at Scrawny Will again, overturning the table.

Scrawny Will managed to evade him, and rushing

past him and Stretcher Bull gained the door, banged it shut, and five minutes later, was ashore.

"Whew!" he gasped, as he walked swiftly away, with an occasional glance over his shoulder to make sure that he was not pursued, "that was a close call. Jim Cripps is as good as dead; that's one comfort. If he hadn't upset that water and spoiled my scheme on Stretcher Bull, I wouldn't have cared. Well, Owney will have to win the race on his merits now. And I guess he can do it!"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE RACE.

THERE was a big crowd at Hulton to see the great match between Stretcher Bull and the "unknown," who was now no longer an "unknown," but Pittsburgh's pet oarsman, "Git Thar" Owney, the "Boy Oarsman-Detective," also known as the "Infant Detective."

Pittsburg furnished a large proportion of the spectators, but there were "sports" from New York, athletes from Philadelphia, speculators from Chicago, and lovers of manly contests from all parts of the United States.

Basil Montgomery was there, partly to see the race, in which by reason of his hedging, he had no longer a pecuniary interest, and partly to try and recover his diamonds, which Owney had confidently declared should be restored within an hour after the race.

Jim Cripps, as we already know, had developed violent hydrophobic symptoms, and was lying in a hospital, where we will leave him.

Crook Cripps and May were there, the latter eager to see whether "Git Thar" Owney would wear the ribbon she had given him the night before, when she had risked so much to warn him of the plot against him.

Mooney Baggs was there, of course, and Frank Burton and Scrawny Will nodded to each other in a friendly manner, as if neither had been trying every foul trick they could think of to cheat the other in the forthcoming race.

The start was to be made at five o'clock in the afternoon, when the rays of the sun would have lost much of their power.

"How do you feel, Owney?" asked Scrawny, as the trainer was giving the young oarsman a last rubbing down in his quarters.

"Fit as a fiddle," was the reply. "Rub away, Joe," he added to his trainer. "You can't hurt me and you can't rub me down too much."

"The boat looks splendid," said Scrawny to himself, half an hour later, as Owney, with May's blue ribbon on his breast, rowed up to the judge's boat, ready for the start.

A volume of cheers for the gallant young oarsman arose from the crowd, which "Git Thar" acknowledged with a graceful bend of his head.

The next instant Stretcher Bull leisurely paddled into view, and was almost as loudly cheered as his adversary.

"Darn his picture!" muttered Scrawny, under his breath. "He is as strong as a bull. I don't wonder they call him one. If it hadn't been for that crazy fool, Jim Cripps, I'd have fixed him all right. As it is, he may make it mighty interesting for Owney."

At a signal from the starter, Bull and Owney took their positions.

"Go you an even hundred on 'Git Thar,'" said Basil Montgomery to Frank Burton.

"Done!"

The bet was booked.

The betting, started in the group in which Basil Montgomery and Frank Burton were standing, was quickly taken up by others, and soon several thousand dollars even were wagered in their immediate vicinity.

Everybody could see that it was going to be a remarkably close race.

Pittsburgers knew that in their boy oarsman they had a wonderful rower, and they also knew that, so far, Stretcher Bull had never been beaten, though he had met some of the best men in the country.

The excitement was red-hot.

"Oh, I hope he will win!" said May to herself. "He is so handsome and so good! I shall die if Stretcher Bull beats him!"

May Cripps was only a young girl, and she was just as unreasonably prejudiced as any young girl; she argued that Bull must be a "horrid old thing" because Owney was so nice.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" asked the starter, looking down from the judges' boat at the two contestants, whose brawny, muscular arms, bare to the shoulder, glistened in the afternoon sun.

"Ready!" answered Bull.

"Ready!" echoed Owney.

Bang! went the pistol.

They were off!

The great race had commenced.

Both men settled down to their work in a business-like manner.

Bull had slightly the advantage of the start. He took the water first, and in five seconds was half a boat's-length ahead of Owney. This advantage he held for half a mile, but could not increase it.

"Gosh!" muttered Scrawny. "It looks as if the boy can't catch up."

But Owney's face wore a confident smile.

The race was only begun; he was saving his strength.

"I'll bet five to four on Bull," loudly proclaimed Frank Burton.

"In hundreds?" questioned Basil Montgomery.

"Yes."

"Done, with you!"

And another bet was booked.

Burton believed in Stretcher, but Montgomery had

not lost confidence in Owney. He felt that the boy would win the race as easily as he would get the necklace; he would have bet all he had on both events.

The two oarsmen reached the turning buoy in the same relative positions.

And then Owney got further behind.

He did not turn very well, and when he commenced the home-stretch his boat was a clear length in the rear, at which Frank Burton offered to bet Montgomery a thousand to five hundred on Stretcher Bull, and Basil took the bet.

The race was not over yet.

Poor May Cripps began to feel terribly disheartened.

Would not Owney carry her ribbon to victory, after all?

"Do you want to increase your bet?" asked Frank Burton, with a sneer. "I'll go you another thousand to five hundred on Stretcher, if you like."

"I'll go you!" answered Montgomery, excitedly. "That boy is going to win this race!"

Scrawny Will was scratching his head with apprehension.

"Oh, why didn't I fix that drink last night, and then pour it down his throat?" he hissed to himself. "He would be just breaking down now if it hadn't been for that blundering idiot, Jim Cripps."

The two oarsmen were coming down the home-stretch easily but swiftly.

"Oh, why don't that boy put on a spurt? Surely he can do better than that," moaned Scrawny.

"Good boy, Stretcher!" was Frank Burton's approving comment. "Save your strength until you need it, old man. That's right!"

The crowd howled in its excitement.

A few minutes more would decide the race, and thousands of dollars would be won and lost.

"Lay down to it, Owney! Git thar, boy!" yelled the friends of the Boy Oarsman Detective.

"Keep it up, Stretcher! You've got it already," was the cry of the opposite party.

The two contestants made no sign that they heard. They only were the persons who knew that the race was a vigorously contested one; but Owney, with a cheerful smile on his honest young face, evidently believed in himself yet.

Stretcher Bull's teeth were set hard; he was going to get in ahead if the thing was in him.

About half the return distance was covered.

Three-quarters of a mile more!

Suddenly the smile died out of Owney's face, as he bent himself, like Samson of old, and put nearly the whole of his reserve force into his work.

His stroke quickened, and the white foam in the wake of his boat grew broader and fiercer as he shot ahead and decreased the space between him and the Bull to half a length.

Stretcher instantly responded with a similar spurt, but he could not shake the boy off.

The half-length was not increased.

Owney evidently meant to "git thar."

Scrawny Will could not contain himself.

"That's right, Owney!" he yelled. "Do that again. Another spurt and you'll make it."

May Cripps could only clasp her hands and watch the blue ribbon on Owney's breast.

How fervently she prayed that he would be successful!

The pace now was tremendous!

It looked as if both Owney and Stretcher were at the limit of their powers.

"Owney, can't you put on a little more steam?" howled Scrawny Will in agony of spirit, as he feared that the half-length distance would still exist when they passed the post, and that "Git Thar" Owney would be defeated by that difference.

Frank Burton smiled coolly; he was quite comfortable about the result.

"Want to go another five hundred?" he asked of Basil Montgomery.

"Well, no," returned Basil; "I don't care about any more."

"I'll give you odds of three to one," said Frank Burton.

"Fifteen hundred to five?"

"Yes."

"I'll go you!"

And that further bet was made.

Montgomery had seen a something in the work of Owney at that moment which had renewed his confidence in his young champion.

There was only a quarter of a mile left, but could not the race be saved on that stretch of water?

He thought so.

Was he right?

It looked like it.

Again Owney made that sudden bend, and again his boat shot ahead in obedience to the "spurt" until he was level with Stretcher Bull.

As before, Stretcher tried to take the half-length away from Owney, and as before he failed.

"Hurrah, Owney! Good boy! Keep it up!" yelled Scrawny. "Keep it up! The race is ours! Keep it up!"

"Shut your mouth!" growled Frank Burton, angrily. "What are you howling about?"

But Scrawny could not be restrained. He felt sure of victory now, and did not care for anything else.

"Do you want to bet three to one on your man now?" asked Montgomery of Frank Burton, with a quiet smile.

"No!" returned Burton, fiercely.

"I should like to invest another five hundred," persisted Montgomery.

"I tell you I don't want to bet any more," retorted Burton, with a baleful glance at the other. "Isn't that plain enough?"

"All right."

"Stretcher!" "Owney!" "Let yourselves out!"



"Lay down to it!" cried the crowd, in a hundred different voices.

"Oh, he'll put my ribbon in first—I know he will!" thought May, with a delighted smile dimpling her pretty face.

For the third time "Git Thar" Owney bent down, and the spectators then saw him leap ahead with a feeling of irresistible admiration of his splendid rowing, no matter how their interests were affected.

Bull gamely tried to get level with a "spurt" that made the muscles on his arms and neck look as if they would burst through the skin.

In vain! He had been using every ounce of strength he had before, and he could not add to it.

Owney had been saving himself a very little, but just enough to give him something for the last few yards.

Half a dozen strokes and he would pass the post with Stretcher Bull half a length behind.

"Three cheers for 'Git Thar' Owney!" yelled some one in the crowd.

"Good boy; good boy!" chuckled Scrawny Will.

"I knew it was in him!"

Six more strokes!

One! two! three!

Crack!

One of Owney's oars had broken short off!

#### CHAPTER XV.

OWNEY "GITS 'HAR" IN A DOUBLE SENSE.

WHEN the accident happened Scrawny Will gave a yell of disappointment and horror almost simultaneously, with the crack!

Just when victory was in his grasp!

When he could almost feel the money in his hand, and in imagination hear the crisp rustle of new bank-notes!

It was awful!

Scrawny seemed to live ten years of agony in a second.

He turned his eyes away from the scene in very despair.

He was ruined—irretrievably ruined!

Then, like a volley of artillery, a roar went up from the multitude.

A roar of surprise, of exultation, of rage, of congratulation, of adulation!

"Rah for 'Git Thar' Owney! The champion of the States!"

"Well rowed, Owney! Well rowed, old man!"

"He was too much for yer, Stretcher!"

"Owney got thar, you bet!"

"Rah for the Boy-Oarsman!"

"Git Thar" Owney had won.

Yes, in spite of his broken oar, he had managed to pass the post first!

He had kept the nose of his boat just a few inches in front of that of Stretcher Bull, but it was enough to give him the race.

The impetus given to the boat by the three strokes before the breaking of the oar had sent the light shell flying forward and put it past the goal almost before Owney realized that his oar was broken.

It was a narrow escape.

Had the oar broken a second sooner it would have been Stretcher Bull's race.

As the two oarsmen turned around to paddle back to the judge's boat—Owney getting along as well as he could with his one oar, Stretcher rowed up to him and put out his hand.

Owney grasped it warmly.

"Well, young one," said Stretcher, "I didn't think you could do it, but I can safely say it was a square race and was won on its merits."

"Yes, I guess it was, Stretcher, I was bound to git thar if I could," returned Owney. "Though I guess I would have been badly knocked out if it hadn't been for you getting me out of that scrape in New York."

"Shut your mouth about that," said Stretcher. "I only wanted to see you get a square deal, that was all."

The judges formally awarded the race to Owney and complimented both him and Bull on the gallant manner in which the contest had been carried out.

Scrawny Will fairly hugged Owney when he stepped out of the boat; but May had disappeared.

She had seen that her blue ribbon had been borne to victory, and she had run home quite contented.

"Scrawny, I want to see you," said Owney, as soon as he had resumed his clothing.

"All right, Owney; of course, I want to talk to you."

"Yes, and I want to speak a few words to you," added Basil Montgomery, who had overheard the last remark uttered by Will.

"To me?" asked Scrawny.

"Yes, sir; to you."

"That's all right," put in Owney. "We may as well make a friendly party of it. I have some business with you, Scrawny, and I don't object to Mr. Montgomery being present."

"Well, where shall we go?" asked Scrawny.

"Why not come to my room at the Monongahela House?" suggested Montgomery—"say at eight o'clock to-night?"

"All right," assented Owney.

"That will suit me," assured Scrawny Will.

Precisely at eight o'clock Scrawny was conducted by a porter to Montgomery's room in the great Pittsburgh hotel known as the Monongahela House.

Owney had left him down-stairs, saying he had to step into the writing-room and would follow him in a minute.

"Where's Owney?" asked Montgomery, as Will entered the room.

"He'll be here directly. Do you want to say anything to me privately?" he asked.

"Ob, no; I can speak before Owney. He knows all about the business."

"Oh!"

"Where is he?" demanded Basil Montgomery, with some impatience, after waiting a few minutes longer.

A rap at the door.

"Come in."

"Somebody to see you," announced the porter.

"Show him in!"

A shabby-genteel man, who might have been a book-agent, stepped into the room.

Scrawny Will and Basil Montgomery both started.

"What do you want?" faltered Scrawny.

"Scrawny Will, I charge you with being in unlawful possession of a diamond and emerald necklace, the property of Basil Montgomery," said the shabby-genteel man.

"It is a lie!" yelled Scrawny Will.

"It's the truth!" said the shabby-genteel man quietly. "There are the diamonds, glistening in your inside coat pocket. I can see them."

Scrawny Will involuntarily tried to hide the opening of the pocket, and thus tacitly admitted the possession of the property.

"Come on!" commanded the shabby-genteel man, producing a pair of handcuffs. "I am going to take you to the station-house."

Scrawny Will was thoroughly cowed.

He dropped on his knees and held up the necklace in his hand.

Montgomery, with a cry of pleasure, seized the jewels that had been missing for so long.

The necklace was intact—just the same as when he had last seen it.

"See here! I have surrendered the property," said Scrawny. "I was only minding it for a friend of mine—Crook Cripps."

"A nice friend! A man for whom I hold a warrant, and whom I will arrest to-day," was the shabby-genteel man's reply.

"I hope you won't press any charge against me," said Scrawny. "I never did anything crooked in my life. I am just a sporting gentleman—not a thief."

"Oh! let him go!" urged Montgomery. "I have got the jewels and I don't care about sending the man to the Penitentiary."

At the word Penitentiary Scrawny Will wilted.

"Can't you let him go, officer?" asked Montgomery.

"I guess so," answered the shabby-genteel man.

"I happen to know that he is telling a straight story for once. Scrawny Will, I'll let you off this time."

Scrawny Will jumped to his feet and wrung the hand of the shabby-genteel man.

"You are a square man," he cried, "and I am your friend from this out. There is only one other person in the world that I feel as well disposed to as I do to you."

"And his name is—"

"'Git Thar' Owney!"

The shabby-genteel man turned around, went through a few rapid movements, and faced them again.

Scrawny Will's eyes seemed about to fly out of his head with surprise, while Montgomery said something under his breath that sounded like "Great Caesar!"

The shabby-genteel man had converted himself into "Git Thar" Owney, the Boy Oarsman-Detective!

—

The money that Owney received for winning the race and for recovering the diamond necklace, put him in comfortable circumstances for a few months independently of his income from other sources as a member of a private detective agency.

Crook Cripps disappeared on the day of the boat race. He got an inkling that a detective was on his track and that he would be arrested on that day for his connection with a certain bank job.

He left a letter addressed to Scrawny Will, in which he said that May was not his daughter, but that of a colonel under whom he had fought in the late war, and who, dying on the field of Gettysburg, had entrusted his infant child to Crook Cripps.

Crook Cripps was a better man in those days, and had willingly undertaken the trust. To his credit it must be said that he had always been very good to May.

His personal safety compelled him to leave her now, and he asked Scrawny to see that she was properly taken care of until the present trouble about the bank job blew over.

Scrawny Will found himself in a quandary. He could not leave the girl alone, and he did not know what to do with her.

Montgomery came to his relief. His wife had taken a fancy to May's appearance and she would take the girl as a companion, to accompany her on her shopping expeditions, help her dress at the theater, and so forth.

May gladly accepted the offer.

As for Owney, he was delighted to learn that May had secured a good home.

He still wears her blue ribbon under his coat, and is a frequent visitor to Montgomery's hotel, wherever he and his wife happen to be, turning up in cities all over the country with all the coolness imaginable.

He does not confess that he comes to see May. In fact, he always says it is detective business that brings him.

May's radiant and blushing face belies this statement, however, and any one can see that she has a more than passing interest in the movements of "Git Thar" OWNEY, THE BOY OARSMAN-DETECTIVE.

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